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1854.

TICONDEROGA :

OR,

THE BLACK EAGLE.

CHAPTER I.

DAY broke slowly and heavily under a grey cloud ; and found Lord H—— and the Indian chief still seated side by side at the entrance of the farm-house. A word or two had passed between them in the earlier part of the night ; but, for many hours before dawn, they had remained perfectly silent. Only once, through

the hours of their vigil, had the Black Eagle moved from his seat ; and that was nearly at midnight. The ears of Lord H—— had been upon the watch, as well as his own ; but, though the English nobleman heard no sound, the chief caught a distant footfall about a quarter before twelve ; and, starting up, he listened attentively.

Then moving slowly towards the door, he stood there a few moments as still as a statue. Presently Lord H—— caught the sound which had moved him, though it was exceedingly light ; and, the next instant, another dusky figure, not quite so tall as that of the chief, darkened the moonlight, and threw its shadow into the door-way.

A few words then passed between the two Indians in their native tongue, at first low and musical in tone, but then rising high in accents which seemed to the ear of the listener to express grief or anger. Not more than five sentences were spoken on either part ; and

then the last comer bounded away with a quick and seemingly reckless step into the forest ; and the old chief returned, and seated himself, assuming exactly the same attitude as before.

When day dawned, however, Black Eagle rose, and said in English—

“Now, my brother, let the voice of the Cataract awake the maiden ; and I will lead you on the way. Her horse has not yet come ; but, if it have not run with the wind or fed upon the fire, it will be here speedily.”

“Do you know, then, what became of it after it broke away from us ?” asked Lord H——.

“Nay,” answered the Indian, “I know not ; but my steps were in yours, from the setting sun till you came hither. I was there for your safety, my brother, and for the safety of the maiden.”

“We should often have been glad of your

advice," observed Lord H——; "for we were sometimes often in sore need of better information than our own."

"The man who aids himself, needs no aid," answered Black Eagle. "Thou wert sufficient for the need; why should I take from thee the right to act?"

As they were speaking, the light step of Edith was heard upon the stairs; and the eyes of Black Eagle were fixed upon her as she descended, with a look, which seemed to Lord H—— to have some significance, though he could not tell exactly in what the peculiarity consisted. It was calm and grave; but there was a sort of tenderness in it, which, without knowing why, made the young nobleman fear that the Indian was aware of some evil having befallen Mr. Prevost.

His mind was soon relieved, however; for, when Edith had descended, the chief said, at once—

“Thy father is safe, my daughter. He passed through the fire uninjured, and is in his own lodge.”

Edith looked pale and worn ; but the words of the chief called a joyful smile upon her face, and the color back into her cheek. In answer to the inquiries of Lord H——, she admitted that she had slept hardly at all, and added, with a returning look of anxiety, “How could I sleep, so uncertain as I was of my father’s safety?”

She expressed an anxious desire to go forward as soon as possible, and not to wait for the chance of her horse being caught by the Indians, which she readily comprehended as the meaning of the Black Eagle, when his somewhat ambiguous words were reported to her.

“They may catch him,” she said, “or they may not ; and my father will be very anxious, I know, till he sees me. I can walk quite well.”

The Indian was standing silently at the door, to which he had turned after informing her of her father's safety ; and Lord H——, taking her hand, inquired in a low tone, if she would be afraid to stay alone with the Black Eagle for a few moments, while he sought for some food for herself and him.

“Not in the least,” she answered. “After his words last night, and the throwing of his blanket round me, I am as safe with him as Otaita would be. From that moment, he looked upon me as his daughter, and would treat me as such in any emergency.”

“Well then, I will not be long,” returned Lord H——; and, passing the Indian, he said, “I leave her to your care for a few moments, Black Eagle.”

The Indian only answered by a sort of guttural sound, peculiar to his people ; and then, turning back into the house, he seated himself on the ground as before, and seemed inclined to remain in silence. But there were doubts in

Edith's mind, which she wished to have solved; and she said, "Is not my father thy brother, Black Eagle?"

"He is my brother," answered the Indian laconically, and relapsed into silence.

"Will a great chief suffer any harm to happen to his brother?" asked Edith again, after considering for a few moments how to shape her question.

"No warrior of the Totem of the Tortoise dare raise a tomahawk against the brother of the Black Eagle," answered the chief.

"But is not Black Eagle the great chief of the Oneidas?" said Edith again. "Do not the people of the Stone hear his voice? Is he not to them as the rock on which their house is founded? Whither in the sky could the Oneidas soar if the Black Eagle led them not? And shall they disobey his voice?"

"The people of the Stone have their laws," replied the chief; "which are thongs of leather, to bind each Sachem, and each Totem, and

each warrior. They were whispered into the roll of Wampum, which is in the hand of the great medicine-man, or priest, as you would call him ; and the voice of the Black Eagle, though it be strong in war, is as the song of the bobolink when compared to the voice of the laws."

Short as this conversation may seem when written down, it had occupied several minutes ; for the Indian had made long pauses ; and Edith, willing to humor him by adopting the custom of his people, had followed his example.

His last reply was hardly given, when Lord H—— returned, carrying a dry and rather hard loaf, and a jug of clear, cold water.

"I have not been very successful," he said ; "for the people have evidently abandoned the place, and all their cupboards but one are locked up. In that, however, I found this loaf."

"They are squirrels who fly along the

boughs at the sound of danger, and leave their stores hidden," said the Black Eagle. "But dip the bread in water, my daughter; it will give you strength by the way."

Lord H—— laid the loaf down upon the table, and hurried out of the room again; but Edith had little opportunity of questioning her dusky companion further before the nobleman's return. He was absent hardly two minutes; and, when he came back, he led his horse behind him, somewhat differently accoutered from the preceding day. The demi-pique saddle was now covered with a pillow firmly strapped on with some leathern thongs which he had found in the house, thus forming it into a sort of pad; and the two stirrups brought to one side, stretched as far apart as possible, and somewhat shortened, were kept extended by a piece of plank passed through the irons, and firmly attached; thus presenting a comfortable rest for the feet of any one sitting sideways on the horse.

TICONDEROGA.

Lord H—— had done many a thing in life on which he might reasonably pride himself. He had resisted temptations to which most men would have yielded ; he had done many a gallant and noble deed ; he had displayed great powers of mind, and high qualities of heart, in terrible emergencies and moments of great difficulty ; but it may be questioned whether he had ever smiled so complacently on any act of his whole life as on the rapid and successful alteration of his own inconvenient saddle into a comfortable lady's pad ; and when he brought out Edith to the door, and she saw how he had been engaged, she could not help rewarding him with a beaming smile, in which amusement had a less share than gratitude. Even over the dark countenance of the Indian, trained to stoical apathy, something flitted, not unlike a smile.

Lifting his fair charge in his arms, Lord H—— seated her lightly on the horse's back, adjusted the rest for her feet with care, and

then took the bridle to lead her on the way. The Indian chief, without a word, walked on before at a pace with which the horse's swiftest walk could hardly keep up; and, crossing the cleared land around the house, they were soon once more under the branches of the forest.

More than once, the Black Eagle had to pause and lean upon his rifle, waiting for his two companions; but, doubtless, it was the difficulties of the narrow path, never made for horses' hoofs, and not the pleasure of prolonging conversation, and of gazing up, the while, into a pair of as beautiful eyes as ever shone upon mortal man, or into a face which might have looked out of Heaven and not have shamed the sky, that retarded the nobleman on his way.

Six miles were at length accomplished; and then they came into the military high road again, which led within a short distance of Mr. Prevost's cottage. During the whole journey, the Indian chief had not uttered a word; but,

as soon as he had issued forth from the narrow path into the more open road, he paused and waited till Edith came up ; then, pointing with his hand, he said—

“Thou knowest the way, my daughter ; thou hast no more need of me ; the Black Eagle must wing his way back to his own rock.”

“But shall we be safe ?” asked Edith.

“As in the happy hunting-grounds,” replied the chief. And, turning away, he re-entered the trail by which they came.

Their pace was not much quicker than it had been in the more difficult path. The seal seemed to be taken from Lord H——’s lips. He felt that Edith was safe, nearer home, no longer left completely to his mercy and his delicacy, and his words were tender and full of strong affection ; but she laid her hand gently upon his as it rested on the peak of the saddle, and, with a face glowing as if the leaves of the Autumn maples had cast a reflection from their crimson hues upon it, she said—

“Oh, not now, not now—for heaven’s sake spare me a little, still.”

He gazed up in her face with a look of earnest inquiry ; but he saw something there, either in the half-veiled swimming eyes, or in the glowing cheek, or the agitated quivering of the lip, which was enough to satisfy him.

“Forgive me,” he said, in a deprecatory tone ; but then the moment after he added, with frank soldierly boldness, “Dear Edith, I may thank you now, and thank you with my whole heart ; for I am not a confident fool, and you are no light coquette ; and did you hesitate, you would say more.”

Edith bent her head almost to the saddle-bow ; and some bright drops rolled over her cheek. The companions remained silent, each communing with his and her own thoughts for a short time.

They were roused from somewhat agitated reveries by a loud and joyous call ; and, looking up the ascent before them, they saw Mr. Pre-

vost on horseback, and two of the negro slaves on foot, coming down as if to meet them. They hurried on fast. The father and daughter sprang to the ground ; and oh, with what joy she felt herself in his arms !

It is a mistake to think that affection cannot be divided. Love is like the Banyan tree, which increases its own volume by casting forth shoots in every direction ; and each separate branch grows and strengthens by the other. At that moment, with her whole bosom thrilling with new emotions—with love for another acknowledged to her own soul—with the earnest looking forward to happiness with him—oh, how much more strongly than ever she had felt it before, did Edith feel her love for her father ! What relief, what comfort, what happiness, it was to her to find herself in those fond, paternal arms !

It is unnecessary to give here the explanations that ensued. Mr. Prevost had little to

tell. He had passed safely, though not without much danger and the scorching of his clothes and face, along the course of the stream, and through a small part of the thicker wood. He had found his house and all the buildings safe, and even the forest immediately around still free from the fire, and out of danger, as long as the wind remained easterly. Satisfied that his daughter would find the farmer's family, and be kindly entertained, he had felt no anxiety on her account, till about an hour before, when her horse had come back to the house with the saddle and housings scorched and blackened, and the hoofs nearly burnt off his feet. In great alarm for Edith, Mr. Prevost, had set out to seek her in haste. Her tale was soon told; and, again and again, Mr. Prevost shook her protector's hand, thanking him earnestly for all he had done for his child.

The distance to the house was not now great; and, giving the horses to the negroes,

the little party proceeded on foot, talking over the events of the last few hours. When they reached the house, there were somewhat obstreperous screams of joy from the women servants, to see their young Mistress return; and Edith was speedily carried away to her chamber for rest and refreshment. Breakfast was immediately prepared in the hall for Lord H—— who had tasted no food since the middle of the preceding day; but he ate little even now, and there was a sort of restlessness about him which Mr. Prevost remarked with some anxiety.

“My Lord, you hardly taste your food,” he said; “and either seem not well, or not well at ease. I trust you have no subject of grief or apprehension pressing on your mind.”

“None whatever,” replied Lord H——, with a smile; “but, to tell you the truth, my dear sir, I am impatient for a few moments’ conversation with you, alone; and I could well

have spared my breakfast till they were over. Pray let us go into the other room, where we shall not be interrupted."

Mr. Prevost led the way, and closed the door after them, with a grave face; for, as is usual in such cases, he had not the faintest idea of what was coming.

"Our acquaintance has been very short, Mr. Prevost," said Lord H——, as soon as they were seated—feeling, indeed, more hesitation and embarrassment than he had imagined he could have experienced in such circumstances. "But I trust you have seen enough of me, taken together with what you may know by general repute, to make what I am going to say not very presumptuous."

Mr. Prevost gazed at him in perfect astonishment, unable to conceive where his speech would end; and, as the nobleman paused, he answered, "Pray speak on, my Lord. Believe me, I have the highest esteem and regard for you. Your character and conduct through

life have, I well know, added lustre to your rank ; and noble blood has justified itself in you by noble actions. What on earth can you have to say, which could make me think you presumptuous for a moment ?”

“Simply this, and, perhaps, you *may* think me presumptuous when I have said it,” replied Lord H——. “I am going to ask you to give me something, which I value very much, and which you rightly value as much as anything you possess. I mean your daughter. Nay, do not start, and turn so pale. I know all the importance of what I ask ; but I have now passed many days entirely in her society—I have gone through some difficulties and dangers with her, as you know—scenes and sensations which endear two persons to each other. I have been much in woman’s society—I have known the bright and the beautiful in many lands—perhaps my expectations have been too great—my wishes too exacting ; but I never met woman hitherto who touched my heart. I have

now found the only one whom I can love ; and I ask her of you with a full consciousness of how much it is I ask."

Mr. Prevost had remained profoundly silent, with his eyes bent down, and his cheek, as Lord H—— had said, very pale. There was a great struggle in his heart, as there must be always in a parent's bosom in such circumstances.

"She is very young—so very young—just seventeen !" he murmured, speaking to himself rather than to his companion.

"I may, indeed, be somewhat too old for her," said Lord H——, thoughtfully ; "yet, I trust, in heart and spirit at least, Mr. Prevost, I have still all the freshness of youth about me."

"Oh, it is not that—it is not that at all," answered Edith's father ; "it is that she is so very young to take upon herself both cares and duties. True, she is no ordinary girl, and, perhaps, if ever any one was fit at so early an age for the great responsibilities of such a state,

it is Edith. Her education has been singular—unlike that of any other girl.”

Mr. Prevost had wandered away, as was his custom, from the immediate question to collateral issues; and was no longer considering whether he should give his consent to Edith's marriage with Lord H——, but whether she was fit for the marriage state at all, and what effect the education she had received would have upon her conduct as a wife. The lover, in the meantime, habitually attaching himself and every thought to one important object, was impatient for something more definite; and he ventured to break across Mr. Prevost's spoken reverie by saying—

“Our marriage would be necessarily delayed, Mr. Prevost, for some time, even if I obtain your consent. May I hope that it will be granted to me—if no personal objection exists towards myself?”

“None in the world,” exclaimed Mr. Prevost, eagerly. “You cannot suppose it for

a moment, my dear Lord. All I can say is, that I will oppose nothing which Edith calmly and deliberately thinks is for her own happiness. What does she say herself?"

"She says nothing," answered Lord H—— with a smile; "for, though she cannot doubt what are my feelings towards her, she has not been put to the trial of giving any answer, without your expressed approbation. May I believe then that I have your permission to offer her my hand?"

"Beyond a doubt," replied Mr. Prevost. "Let me call her; her answer will soon be given; for she is not one to trifle with anybody."

He rose as he spoke, as if to quit the room; but Lord H—— stopped him, saying,

"Not yet, not yet, my dear Sir. She had little, if any, rest last night, and has had much fatigue and anxiety during the last twenty-four hours. Probably she is taking some repose; and I must not allow even a lover's impatience to deprive her of that."

“ I had forgotten,” said Mr. Prevost. “ It is indeed true, that the dear child must need some repose. It is strange, my Lord, how sorrows and joys blend themselves together, in all events of mortal life. I had thought, when in years long ago I entwined my fingers in the glossy curls of my Edith’s hair, and, looking through the liquid crystal of her eyes, seemed to see into the deep fountains of pure emotions in her young heart—I had thought, I say, that few joys would be equal to that of seeing her at some future day bestow her hand on a man worthy of her, to make and partake the happiness of a cheerful home. But now I find the thought has its bitter, as well as sweet; and memories of the grave rise up, to cast a solemn shade over the bright picture fancy drew.”

His tone dropped gradually as he spoke; and, fixing his eyes again upon the ground, he relapsed into absent thought.

Lord H—— would not disturb his friend’s

reverie ; and, walking gently out of the room, he gave himself also up to meditation. But his reflective moods were of a different kind from those of his friend—more eager, more active ; and they required some employment for the limbs, while the mind was so busy. To and fro he walked before the house, for nearly an hour, before Mr. Prevost came forth and joined him ; and then the walk still continued ; but the father's thoughts, though they had wandered for awhile, soon returned to his daughter, and their conversation was of Edith only.

At length, when it was nearly noon, as they turned upon the little open space of ground in front of the dwelling, the eyes of the nobleman, which had been turned more than once to the door, rested on Edith, as she stood in the hall and gazed forth over the prospect.

“ The fire seems to be raging there still,” she said, pointing with her fair hand over the

country towards the south-west, where hung a dense canopy of smoke above the forest. "What a blessing one of our heavy autumnal rains would be !"

Lord H—— made no reply, but suddenly left her father's side ; and, taking the extended hand in his, led her into the little sitting-room.

Shall we follow them thither, and listen to the words they spoke—shall we tear the veil from that young, innocent, gentle heart, and show, in the broad glare, the shy emotions only fitted to be seen by one eye beside that of God ? Oh no ! They remained long together—to Mr. Prevost it seemed very long—but when Edith's lover led her to the door again, happy tears were once more in her eyes, glad blushes on her cheek ; and, though the strong, manly arm was fondly thrown around her waist, she escaped from its warm clasp, and cast herself upon the bosom of her father.

“She is mine!” ejaculated Lord H——;
“she is mine!”

“But none the less mine,” answered Mr. Prevost, kissing her cheek.

“Oh no,” said Edith, “no! Always yours, my dear father—your child.” And then she added, while the glowing blood rushed over her beautiful face, like the gush of morning over a white cloud, “*your* child, though *his* wife.”

It cost her an effort to utter the word; yet she was pleased to speak it; but then, the moment after, as if to hide it from memory again, she said, “Oh that dear Walter were here! He would be very happy, I know, and say I had come to the end of my day-dreaming.”

“He will be here probably to-night,” observed her lover.

“We must not count upon it,” rejoined her father; “he may meet with many things to detain him. But now, my children, I will go

in, and make up my journal till the dinner hour."

Edith leaned fondly on his bosom, and whispered, " And write that this has been one happy day, my father."

Alas, alas, that the brightest sunshine and the softest sky should so often precede the day of storms ! Alas, that the dark tempest-clouds should be so frequently gathering beneath the horizon all around us, when the sky above seems full of hope and promise ! But so it is too often in this life. The old geographers' fancied figure of the earth was very like the earth on which human hopes are raised—a fair and even plain, with a yawning precipice all round it.

CHAPTER II.

THE day went by; night fell; and Walter Prevost did not appear in his father's house. No alarm, however, was entertained; for, out of the wide range of chances, there were many events which might have occurred to detain him. A shade of anxiety, perhaps, came over Edith's mind; but it passed away the next morning, when she heard from the negro Chando, or Alexander, (who, having been brought up amongst the Indians from his infancy, was better acquainted with their habits than any person in the house,) that not a single red man had been in the neighbourhood since the preceding morning at eight o'clock.

“ All gone west, Missy,” he said ; “ the last to go were old chief Black Eagle. I hear of him coming to help you, and I go out to see.”

Edith asked no questions in regard to the sources of his information ; for he was famous for finding out all that was going on in the neighbourhood, and, with a child-like vanity, making somewhat of a secret of the means by which he obtained intelligence ; but she argued reasonably, though wrongly, that, as Walter was not to set out from Albany till about the same hour that the Indians left, he could not have fallen in with any of their parties.

Thus passed the morning till about three o'clock ; but then, when the lad did not appear, anxiety rose up, and became strong, as hour after hour went by, and he came not. Each tried to sustain the hopes of the others ; each argued against the apprehensions he himself entertained. Lord H—— pointed out that the Commander-in-Chief to whom Walter

had been sent, might be absent from Albany. Mr. Prevost suggested that the young man might have found no boat coming up the river ; and Edith remembered that very often the boatmen were frightfully exorbitant in their charge for bringing any one on the way who seemed eager to proceed. Knowing her brother's character well, she thought it very likely that he would resist an attempt at imposition, even at the risk of delay. But still she was very, very anxious ; and, as night again fell, and the hour of repose arrived without his presence, tears gathered in her eyes, and trembled on the silken lashes.

The following morning dawned in heavy rain ; a perfect deluge seemed descending from the sky. Still Lord H—— ordered his horse at an early hour, telling Edith and Mr. Prevost, in as quiet and easy a tone as he could assume, that he was going to Albany.

“ Although I trust and believe,” he said, “ that my young friend Walter has been de-

tained by some accidental circumstance, yet it will be satisfactory to us all to know what has become of him ; and, moreover, it is absolutely necessary that I should have some communication as speedily as possible with the Commander-in-Chief. I think it likely that Walter may have followed him down the river, as he knows my anxiety for an immediate answer. I must do so too, if I find him still absent ; but you shall hear from me when I reach Albany ; and I will be back myself as soon as possible."

Edith gazed at him with a melancholy look, for she felt how much she needed, and how much more she might still need, the comfort of his presence ; but she would not say a word to prevent his going.

The breakfast that day was a sad and gloomy meal. The lowering sky, the pouring rain, the thoughts that were in the hearts of all, banished everything like cheerfulness. Various orders were given for one of the servants to be ready to guide

Lord H—— on his way, for ascertaining whether the little river were in flood, and other matters; and the course which Walter was likely to take on his return, was considered and discussed, in order that the nobleman might take the same road, and meet him, if possible; but this was the only conversation which took place.

Just as they were about to rise from table, however, a bustle was heard without, amongst the servants; and Mr. Prevost started up, exclaiming—

“Here he is, I do believe!”

But the hope was dispelled the next instant; for a young man in full military costume, but drenched with rain, was ushered into the room, and advanced towards Lord H——, saying, in a quiet, common-place tone—

“We arrived last night, my Lord, and I thought it better to come up and report myself immediately, as the quarters are very insuffi-

cient, and we may expect a great deal of stormy weather, I am told."

Lord H—— looked at him gravely, as if he expected to hear something more; and then said, after a moment's pause—

"I do not exactly understand you, Captain Hammond. You have arrived where?"

"Why, at the Boatmen's village on the point, my Lord," replied the young officer, with a look of some surprise; "have you not received Lord Loudon's dispatch, in answer to your Lordship's own letters?"

"No, sir," replied Lord H——; "but you had better come and confer with me in another room."

"Oh, George, let us hear all," exclaimed Edith, laying her hand upon his arm, and divining his motives at once; "if there be no professional reason for secresy, let us hear all."

"Well," said Lord H——, gravely, "pray,

Captain Hammond, when were his Lordship's letters dispatched, and by whom?"

"By the young gentleman you sent, my Lord," replied Captain Hammond; "and he left Albany two days ago, early in the morning. He was a fine gentlemanly young fellow who won us all, and I went down to the boat with him myself."

Edith turned very pale, and Mr. Prevost inquired—

"Pray has anything been heard of the boat since?"

"Yes, sir," answered the young officer, beginning to perceive the state of the case; "she returned to Albany the same night, and we came up in her yesterday, as far as we could. I made no inquiries after young Mr. Prevost, for I took it for granted he had arrived with the dispatches."

Lord H—— turned his eyes towards the face of Edith, and saw quite sufficient there to

make him instantly draw a chair towards her, and seat her in it.

“Do not give way to apprehension,” he said, “before we know more. The case is strange, undoubtedly, dear Edith ; still the enigma may be solved in a happier way than you think.”

Edith shook her head sadly, saying, in a low tone—

“You do not know all, dear George—at least, I believe not. The Indians have received an offence they never forgive. They were wandering about here on the night we were caught by the fire, disappearing the next morning ; and, some time during that night, my poor brother must have been—”

Tears broke off the sentence ; but her lover eagerly caught at a few of her words to find some ground of hope for her—whatever he might fear himself.

“He may have been turned from his course by the burning forest,” he said, “and have

found a difficulty in retracing his way. The woods were still burning yesterday, and we cannot tell how far the fire may have extended. At all events, dearest Edith, we have gained some information to guide us. We can now trace poor Walter to the place where he disembarked, and that will narrow the ground we have to search. Take courage, love, and let us all trust in God."

"He says that Walter intended to disembark four miles south of the King's road," said Mr. Prevost, who had been talking earnestly to Captain Hammond. "Let us set out at once, and examine the ground between this place and that."

"I think not," remarked Lord H——, after a moment's thought. "I will ride down, as fast as possible, to the house, and gain what information I can there. Then, spreading a body of men to the westward, we will sweep all the trails up to this spot. You, and as many of your people as can be spared from the

house, may come on to meet us setting out in an hour ; but, for Heaven's sake, do not leave this dear girl alone."

"I fear not—I fear not for myself," replied Edith; "only seek for Walter, obtain some news of him, and let us try to save him if there be yet time to do so."

Covering her eyes with her handkerchief which was wetted with her tears, Edith took no more part in what was going on, but gave herself up to bitter thought ; and many and complex were the trains which it followed. Now a gleam of hope would rise up and cheer her for an instant into a belief that her lover's supposition might be correct, and that Walter might, indeed, have been cut off by the fire, and, not knowing which way it extended, might have taken a course leading far away from the house. With the hope, as ever, came the fear ; and she asked herself—

"Might he not have perished in the woods—perished of hunger—perished by the flame ?

But he was prompt, resolute, and accustomed, for some years, to the life of the woods. He had his rifle with him too, and was not likely to want food when that was in his hand."

But, prominent over all in darkness and dread, was the fear of Indian vengeance; and the more she thought of the probability of her brother having been entrapped by some party of the Oneidas, the more terrible grew her apprehensions, the more completely her hopes dwindled away. There were certainly Indians in the forest, she thought, at a time when Walter must have been there. With their quick sight and hearing, and their tenacity of pursuit, he was not likely to escape them; and, if once he fell into their hands, his fate seemed to her sealed. The protection promised to herself by the old chief, but not extended to her family, alarmed rather than re-assured her; and she saw nothing in Black Eagle's unwillingness to give any assurances of their safety, but a determination to take vengeance, even on

those who were dear to him. As she recalled, too, all the particulars of the old chief's visit to that lonely farm-house, and her interviews with him, an impression, at first faint, but growing stronger and stronger, took possession of her mind, that the chief knew of her brother's capture before he parted from her.

These thoughts did not indeed present themselves in regular succession, but came all confused, and whirling through her mind; while the only thing in the gloomy crowd of fancies and considerations to which she could fix a hope, was the cool deliberation with which the Indians pursued any scheme of vengeance, and the slow and systematic manner with which they carried their purposes into execution.

While Edith remained plunged in these gloomy reveries, an active but not less sad consultation was going on at the other side of the room, which ended in the adoption of the plan proposed by Lord H——, very slightly

modified by the suggestions of Mr. Prevost. An orderly, whom Captain Hammond had brought with him, was left at the house as a sort of guard to Edith, it being believed that the sight of his red coat would act as an intimation to any Indians who might be in the woods that the family was under the protection of the British government.

Lord H—— and the young officer set off together for the Boatmen's village, whence Walter had departed for Albany, and where a small party of English soldiers were now posted, intending to obtain all the aid they could, and sweep along the forest till they came to the verge of the recent fire, leaving sentinels on the different trails, which, the reader must understand, were so numerous throughout the whole of what the Iroquois called their Long House, as often to be within hail of each other.

Advancing steadily along these small path-

ways, Lord H—— calculated that he could reconnoitre the whole distance between the greater river and the fire with sufficient closeness to prevent any numerous party of Indians passing unseen, at least till he met with the advancing party of Mr. Prevost, who were to search the country thoroughly for some distance round the house, and then to proceed steadily forward in a reverse course to that of the nobleman and his men.

No time was lost by Lord H—— and Captain Hammond on the road, the path they took being, for a considerable distance, the same by which Lord H—— had first arrived at Mr. Prevost's house, and, for its whole length, the same which the Captain had followed in the morning. It was somewhat longer, it is true, than the Indian trail by which Woodchuck had led them on his ill-starred expedition; but its width and better construction more than made up for the difference in dis-

tance ; and the rain had not been falling long enough to affect its solidity to any great extent.

Thus, little more than an hour sufficed to bring the two officers to the spot where a company of Lord H——'s regiment was posted. The primary task—that of seeking some intelligence of Walter's first movements after landing—was more successful than might have been expected. A settler, who supplied the boatmen with meal and flour, was even then in the village ; and he averred truly that he had seen young Mr. Prevost, and spoken with him, just as he was quitting the cultivated ground on the bank of the river, and entering the forest ground beyond. Thus, his course was traced up to a quarter before three o'clock on the Thursday preceding, and to the entrance of a government road, which all the boatmen knew well. The distance between that spot and Mr. Prevost's house was about fourteen

miles, and from the boatmen's village to the mouth of the road through the forest some six or seven.

Besides the company of soldiers, numbering between seventy and eighty men, there were, at least, forty or fifty stout, able-bodied fellows amongst the boatmen, well acquainted with all the intricacies of the woods round about, and fearless and daring from the constant perils and exertions of their mode of life. These were soon gathered round Lord H——, whose rank and military station they now learned for the first time; and he found that the tidings of the disappearance of Walter Prevost, whom most of them knew and loved, excited a spirit in them which he had little expected.

Addressing a few words to them, at once, he offered a considerable reward to each man who would join in searching thoroughly the whole of that part of the forest which lay between the spot where the young man was last

seen and his father's house. But one tall, stout man, about forty years of age, stepped forward, and spoke for the rest, saying—

“We want no reward for such work as that, my Lord. I guess there's not a man of us who will not turn out to search for young Master Walter, if you'll but leave red coats enough with the old men to protect our wives and children in case of need.”

“I cannot venture, for anything not exactly connected with the service,” replied Lord H——, “to weaken the post by more than one quarter its number. Still we shall make up a sufficient party to search the woods adequately if you will all go with me.”

“That we will, that we will !” exclaimed a dozen voices.

Everything was soon arranged. Signals and modes of communication and co-operation were speedily agreed upon ; and the practical knowledge of the boatmen proved fully as serviceable as the military science of Lord H——,

who was far too wise not to avail himself of it to the fullest extent.

With about twenty regular soldiers, thirty-seven or thirty-eight men from the village, each armed with his invariable rifle and hatchet, and a number of good, big, active boys, who volunteered to act as a sort of runners, and keep up the communications between the different parts of the line, the nobleman set out upon his way along the edge of the forest, and reached the end of the government road, near which Walter had been last seen, about one o'clock in the day.

Here the men dispersed, the soldiers guided by the boatmen; and the forest ground was entered at about fourteen different places, wherever an old or a new trail could be discovered. Whenever an opportunity presented itself, by the absence of brushwood, or the old trees being wide or far apart, the boys ran across from one party to another, carrying information or directions; and, though each

little group was often hidden from the other, as they advanced steadily onwards, still it rarely happened that many minutes elapsed without their catching a sight of some friendly party; on the right or left, while whoop and hallo marked their progress to each other. Once or twice, the trails crossing, brought two parties to the same spot, but then, separating again immediately, they sought each a new path, and proceeded as before.

Few traces of any kind could be discovered on the ground ; for the rain, though it had now ceased, had so completely washed the face of the earth, that every print of shoe or moccassin was obliterated. The tracks of cart-wheels, indeed, seemingly recent, and the foot-marks of a horse and some men, were discovered along the government road ; but nothing more ; till, at a spot where a large and deeply-indented trail, left the highway, the ground appeared a good deal trampled by hoof-marks, as if a horse had been standing there for some little time ;

and, under a thick hemlock-tree, at the corner of the trail, sheltering the ground beneath from the rain, the print of a well-made shoe was visible. The step had evidently been turned in the direction of Mr. Prevost's house ; and up that trail Lord H—— himself proceeded, with a soldier and two of the boatmen. No further step could be traced, however ; but the boatman, who had been the spokesman a little while before, insisted upon it that they must be on young Master Walter's track.

“ A New York shoe,” he said, “ made that print, I'm sure ; and, depend upon it, we are right where he went. Keep a sharp look under all the thick trees at the side, my Lord. You may catch another track. Keep behind, boys—you'll brush 'em out.”

Nothing more was found, however, though the man afterwards thought he had discovered the print of a moccassin in the sand, where it had been partly protected. But some rain had reached it, and there was no certainty.

The trail they were then following was, I have said, large and deeply worn, so that the little party of Lord H—— soon got somewhat in advance of all the others, except that which had continued on the government road.

“Stay a bit, my Lord,” said the boatman, at length; “we are too far a-head, and might chance to get a shot if there be any of them red devils in the wood. I know them well, and all their ways, I guess, having been among them, man and boy, this thirty years; and it was much worse when I first came. They’ll lie as close to you as that bush, and the first thing you’ll know of it will be a ball whizzing into you. If, however, we all go on in line, they can’t keep back, but will creep away like mice. What I can’t understand is, why they should try to hurt young Master Walter, for they were all as fond of him as if he were one of themselves.”

“The fact is, my good friend,” replied Lord H——, in a low tone, “the day I came down

to your landing last, one of the Oneidas was unfortunately killed, and we are told that they will have some white man's life in retaliation."

"To be sure they will!" rejoined the man, with a look of consternation. "They'll have blood for blood, if all of 'em die for't. But did Master Walter kill him?"

"No," replied Lord H——; "it was our friend the Woodchuck, but he did it entirely in self-defence."

"What Brooks?" exclaimed the boatman in much surprise; "do let's hear about it, and I guess I can tell you how it will all go, better than any other man between this and Boston." And he seated himself on the stump of a tree in an attitude of attention.

Very briefly, but with perfect clearness, Lord H—— related all that occurred on the occasion referred to. The boatman listened with evident anxiety, and then sat for a moment in silence with the air of a judge pondering over the merits of a case just pleaded before him.

“ I’ll tell you how it is, my Lord,” he said, at length, in an oracular tone. “ They’ve got him, depend on’t. They’ve caught him here in the forest. But, you see, they’ll not kill him yet—no, no, they’ll wait. They’ve heard that Woodchuck has got away ; and they’ve kidnapped young Walter to make sure of some one. But they’ll stay to see if they can’t get Brooks into their clutches somehow. They’ll go dodgering about all manner o’ ways, and try every trick you can think of to lure him back. Very like you may hear that they’ve killed the lad ; but don’t you believe it for a good many months to come. I guess it’s likely they’ll set that story afloat just to get Brooks to come back ; for then he’ll think that they’ve had all they wanted, and will know that he’s safe from all but the father or the brother or the son of the man he killed. But they’ll wait and see. Oh, they’re the most cunningest set of critturs that ever dived, and no doubt of it ! But let’s get on ; for the others are up—there’s

a red coat through the trees there—and they may perhaps have scalped the boy, though I don't think it's nohow likely."

Thus saying, he rose and led the way again through the dark glades of the wood till the clearer light of day, shining amidst the trunks and branches on before, showed that the party was approaching the spot where the late conflagration had laid the shady monarchs of the forest low. Suddenly, at a spot where another trail crossed, the soldier who was with them stooped down and picked something up off the ground, saying—

"Here's a good large knife, anyhow."

"Let me see—let me see!" cried the boatman; "that's his knife, for a score of dollars.—Ay—'Warner, London,' that's the maker; it's Walter's knife. But that shows nothing. He might have dropped it. But he's come precious near the fire. He surely would never try to break through and get himself burnt to death. If the Ingians had got him, I should have

thought they'd have caught him farther back. Hallo ! what are they all a'doing on there ? They've found the corpse, I guess."

The eyes of Lord H—— were bent forward in the same direction ; and, though his lips uttered no sound, his mind had asked the same question and come to the same conclusion. Three negroes were standing gathered together round some object lying on the ground : and the figure of Mr. Prevost himself, partly seen, partly hidden by the slaves, appeared sitting on a fallen tree, with his head resting on his hand, contemplating fixedly the same object which seemed to engage all the attention of the negroes.

Lord H—— hurried his pace, and reached the spot in a few moments. He was somewhat relieved by what he saw when he came nearer ; for the object at which Mr. Prevost was gazing so earnestly was Walter's knapsack, and not the dead body of his son. The

straps which had fastened it to the lad's shoulders had been cut, not unbuckled ; and it was, therefore, clear that it was not by his own voluntary act that it had been cast off. It did not appear, however, to have been opened ; and the boatman, looking down on it, muttered—

“ No, no ! They would not steal anything—not they. That was not what they wanted. It's no use looking any farther. The case is clear enough.”

“ Too clear !” ejaculated Mr. Prevost, in a dull, stern tone. “ That man, Brooks, has saved his own life, and sacrificed my poor boy.”

The tears gushed into his eyes as he spoke ; and he rose and turned away to hide them. Lord H—— motioned to the negroes to take up the knapsack, and carry it home ; and then advancing to Mr. Prevost's side, he took his hand, saying, in a low tone—

“ There may yet be hope, my dear sir. Let us not give way to despair ; but exert ourselves instantly and strenuously to trace out the poor lad, and save him. Much may yet be done—the Government may interfere—Walter may be rescued by a sudden effort.”

Mr. Prevost shook his head heavily, and murmuring, “ Are *all* my family destined to perish by Indians ?” took his way slowly back towards his house.

Nothing more was said till he was within a quarter of a mile of his own door ; but then, just before emerging from the cover of the wood, the unhappy father stopped, and took the hand of Lord H——.

“ Break it to her gently,” he said, in a low tone. “ I am unfit. Misfortunes, disappointments, and sorrows, have broken the spirit which was once strong, and cast down the energies which used never to fail. It is in such moments as these that I feel how much I

am weakened. Prepare her to leave this place, too. My pleasant solitude has become abhorrent to me, and I cannot live here without a dread and a memory always upon me. Go forward, my good Lord: I will follow you soon."

CHAPTER III.

WITH great pain Lord H—— contemplated the task before him ; but his was a firm and resolute heart ; and he strode forward quickly to accomplish it as soon as possible. Fancy painted, as he went, all the grief and anguish he was about to inflict upon Edith ; but Fancy hardly did her justice—for it left out of the picture many of the stronger traits of her character.

The beautiful girl was watching from the window, and at once recognised her lover as he issued from the wood alone. Her heart sank with apprehension, it is true ; nevertheless, she

ran out along the little path to meet him, in order to know the worst at once.

Before they met, her father came forth from the wood, slowly and heavily, with a crowd of boatmen and soldiers following in groups of six or seven at a time. With wonderful accuracy she divined the greater part of what had occurred. She instantly stopped till Lord H—— came up, and then inquired, in a low and tremulous voice—

“Have you found him? Is he dead or living?”

“We have not found *him*, dear Edith,” said Lord H——, taking her hand, and leading her towards the house; “but your father conceives there is great cause for apprehension of the very worst kind, from what we *have* found. I trust, however, that his fears go beyond the reality, and that there is still—”

“Oh, dear George, do not keep me in suspense!” ejaculated Edith. “Let me hear all

at once. My mind is sufficiently prepared by long hours of painful thought. I will show none of the weakness I displayed this morning. What is it you have found?"

"His knife and his knapsack," replied Lord H——.

"He may have cast his knapsack off from weariness," said Edith, still catching at a hope.

"I fear not," replied her lover, unwilling to encourage expectations to be disappointed. "The straps of the knapsack were cut, not unbuckled; and your father has given himself up entirely to despair, although we found no traces of strife or bloodshed."

"Poor Walter!" exclaimed Edith, with a deep sigh. But she shed no tears; and walked on in silence, till they had reached the little verandah of the house. Then suddenly she stopped, roused herself from her fit of thought, and said, raising her beautiful and tender eyes

to her lover's face, "I have now two tasks before me, to which I must give myself up entirely—to console my poor father, and to try to save my brother's life. Forgive me, George, if, in executing these, especially the latter, I do not seem to give so much of my thoughts to you as you have a right to expect. You would not, I know, have me neglect either."

"God forbid!" exclaimed Lord H——, warmly; "but let me share in them, Edith. There is nothing within the scope of honor and of right that I will not do to save your brother. *I* sent him on this ill-starred errand: to gratify me was that unfortunate expedition made through the wood; but it is enough that he is your brother, and your father's son: and I will do anything—undertake anything—if there be still a hope. Go to your father first, my love, and then let us consult together. I will see these men attended to, for they want rest and food; and I must take liberties with your father's house to provide for them."

“Do, do,” she answered; “use it as your own.”

And, leaving him in the verandah, she turned to meet her father.

Edith well knew that, for a time, Mr. Prevost’s mind was not likely to receive either hope or consolation. All she could give him was tenderness; and Lord H——, who followed her to speak with the soldiers and boatmen, soon saw her disappear into the house with Mr. Prevost.

When he returned to the little sitting-room, Edith was not there, but he heard a murmur of voices from the room above; and, in about half-an-hour, she rejoined him. She was much more agitated than when she had left him; and her face showed marks of tears: not that her fears were greater, or that she had heard anything to alarm her more; but her father’s deep despair had overpowered her own firmness. All the weaker affections of human

nature are infectious: fear, despondency, and sorrow, peculiarly so.

Edith still felt, however, the importance of decision and action; and, putting her hand to her head with a look of bewilderment, she stood, for an instant, in silence, with her eyes fixed on the ground, seemingly striving to collect her scattered thoughts in order to judge and act with precision.

“One of the boatmen, Edith,” said Lord H——, leading her to a seat, “has led me to believe that we shall have ample time for any efforts to save your brother, if he have, as there is too much reason to fear, fallen into the hands of these revengeful Indians. The man seems to know what he talks of well, and boasts that he has been accustomed to the ways and manners of the savages from boyhood.”

“Is he a tall, handsome man, with two children?” asked Edith.

“He is a tall, good-looking man,” answered

Lord H——; “but his children I did not see.”

“If he be the man I mean,” answered Edith, “he can be fully depended upon; and it may be well to ask his opinion and advice before he goes. But, for the present, George, let us consult alone. Perhaps, I can judge better than you of poor Walter’s present situation. That is first to be considered; and then what are the chances, what the means, of saving him. He is certainly in the hands of the Indians—of that I have no doubt—and I think Black Eagle knew it when he guided us through the forest. Yet I do not think he will willingly lift the tomahawk against my brother—it will only be at the last extremity, when all means have failed of entrapping that unhappy man, Brooks. We shall have time—yes, we shall certainly have time.”

“Then the first step to be taken,” said Lord H——, “will be to induce the government to

make a formal and imperative demand for his release. I will undertake that part of the matter ; it shall be done at once."

Edith shook her head sadly.

"You know them not," she said. "It would only hurry his fate." Then, dropping her voice to a very low tone, she added—"They would negotiate and hold councils ; and Walter would be slain while they were treating."

She pressed her hands upon her eyes as she spoke, as if to shut out the fearful image her own words called up ; and then there was a moment or two of silence, at the end of which Lord H—— inquired if it would not be better for him to see Sir William Johnson, and consult with him.

"That may be done," replied Edith. "No man in the province knows them so well as he does ; and his advice may be relied upon. But we must take other measures too. Otaita must be told of Walter's danger, and consulted. Do you know, George," she added, with a

melancholy smile, "I have lately been inclined to think, at times, that there is no small love between Walter and the Blossom—something more than friendship, at all events."

"But of course she will hear of his capture, and do her best to save him," rejoined the young nobleman.

Edith shook her head, answering, "Save him she will, if any human power can do it; but that she knows of his capture, I much doubt. These Indians are wise, George, in their own opinion; and never trust their acts, their thoughts, or their resolutions, to a woman. They will keep the secret from Otaita, just as Black Eagle kept it from me; but she must be informed, consulted, and perhaps acted with. Then I think, too, that poor man Woodchuck should have tidings of what his act has brought upon us."

"I see not well," said Lord H——, "what result that can produce."

“Nor I,” answered Edith; “yet it ought to be done in justice to ourselves and to him. He is bold, skilful, resolute; and we must not judge of any matter in this country as we should judge in Europe. He may undertake and execute something for my brother’s rescue, which you and I would never dream of. He is just the man to do so, and to succeed. He knows every path of the forest, every lodge of the Indians, and is friendly with many of them; has saved the lives of some, I have heard him say, and conferred great obligations upon many; and I believe he will never rest till he has delivered Walter.”

“Then I will find him out, and let him know the facts directly,” said Lord H——. “Perhaps he and Otaita may act together, if we can open any communication with her.”

“She will act by herself, and for herself, I am sure,” replied Edith; “and some communication must be opened at any risk, and all risks. But

let us see the boatman, George. Perhaps he may know some one going into the Indian territory, who may carry a letter to her. 'Tis a great blessing she can read and write; for we must have our secrets too, if we would frustrate theirs."

Lord H—— rose, and proceeded to the hall, where the men whom he had brought with him were busily engaged dispatching such provisions as Mr. Prevost's house could afford on the spur of the moment. The boatman he sought was soon found. Following the young nobleman into the lesser room, he entered into full conference with Edith and her lover, and again expressed the opinion that no harm would happen to young Walter Prevost, for several months at the least. "They have caught some one," he said, "to make sure of their revenge; and that is all they want for the present. Now they will look for the man himself who did it, and catch him if they can."

"Can you tell where he is to be found?" asked Lord H—— in a quiet tone.

"Why you would not give him up to them?" asked the man, sharply.

"Certainly not," replied Lord H——; "he is in safety, and of that safety I have no right to deprive him—it would make me an accessory to the act of the savages. But I wish to see him to tell him what has occurred, and to consult him as to what is to be done."

"That's a different case," observed the man, gravely; "and if that's all you want, I don't mind telling you that he is in Albany, at the public-house called 'The Three Boatmen.' Our people who rowed him down said he did not intend to leave Albany for a week or more."

"And now, Robert," said Edith, "can you tell me where I can get a messenger to the Oneidas? I know you loved my brother Walter well; and I think, if we can get somebody to go for me, we may save him."

“ I did indeed love him well, Miss Prevost,” replied the man, with his firm, hard eye moistened, “ and I’d do anything in reason to save him. It’s a sad pity we did not know of this yesterday ; for a half-breed Onondagua-runner passed by and got some milk from us ; and I gave him the panther’s skin which you, my Lord, told some of our people to send in the poor lad’s name to the daughter of the old chief, Black Eagle.”

Edith turned her eyes to her lover’s face, and Lord H—— replied to their inquiring look, saying—

“ It is true, Edith, Walter shot a panther in the wood, and wished to send the skin to Otaita. We had no time to lose at the moment ; but, as we came back, I induced the guides to skin it, and made them promise to dry and send it forward by the first occasion.”

“ I strapped it on the runner’s back, myself,” said the man whom Edith called Robert, “ and

also gave him the money you sent for him, my Lord. He would have taken any message readily enough, and one could have trusted him. But it may be months before such another chance offers, I guess. Look here, Miss Edith," he continued, turning towards her with a face full of earnest expression, "I would go myself, but what would come of it? They would only kill me instead of your brother, for one man 's as good as another to them in such cases, and perhaps he might not get off either. But I've a wife and two young children, ma'am, and it makes me not quite so ready to risk my life as I was a few years ago."

"It is not to be thought of," said Edith, calmly. "I could ask no one to go; except one partly of their own race; for I know it must be the blood of a white man they spill. All I can desire you to do, for Walter's sake and mine, is to seek for one of the Indian run-

ners, who are often about Albany, and about the army, and send him on to me."

"You see, Miss Prevost," replied the man, "there are not so many about as there used to be, for it is coming on winter; and, as to the army, when Lord Loudon took it to Halifax, almost all the runners and scouts were discharged. Some of them remained with Webb, it is true; but a number of those were killed and scalped by Montcalm's Hurons. However, I will make it my business to seek one, night and day, and send him up."

"Let it be some one on whom we can depend," said Edith; "some one whom you have tried and can trust."

"That makes it harder still," said the man; "for, though I have tried many of them, I can trust few of them. However, I will see, and not be long about it either. But it would be quite nonsense to send you a man who might either never do your errand at all, or go and

tell your message to those you don't want to hear it."

"It would indeed," said Edith, sadly, as all the difficulties and risks which lay in the way of success were suggested to her by the man's words. "Well, do your best, Robert," she said, at length, after some thought; "and, as you will have to pay the man, here is money for—"

"You can pay him yourself, ma'am," replied the boatman, bluntly. "As for taking any myself for helping poor Master Walter, that's what I won't do. When I have got to take an oar in hand, or anything of that kind, I make the people pay fast enough what my work's worth—perhaps a little more sometimes," he added, with a laugh. "But not for such work as this—no, no, not for such work as this. So good-bye, Miss Prevost—good-bye, my Lord. I won't let the grass grow under my feet in looking for a messenger."

Thus saying, he quitted the room ; and Edith and Lord H—— were once more left alone together. Sad and gloomy was their conversation, unchequered by any of those bright beams of love and joy which Edith had fondly fancied were to light her future hours. All was dim and obscure in the distance ; and the point upon which both their eyes were fixed most intently in the dark shadowy curtain of the coming time, was the murkiest and most obscure of all. Whatever plan was suggested, whatever course of action was thought of, difficulties rose up to surround it, and perils presented themselves on all sides.

Nor did the presence of Mr. Prevost, who joined them soon after, tend, in any degree, to support or to direct. He had lost all hope, at least for the time ; and the only thing which seemed to afford him a faint gleam of light was the thought of communicating immediately with Brooks.

“ I fear Sir William Johnson will do

nothing," he said. "He is so devoted even to the smallest interest of the government, his whole mind is so occupied with this one purpose of cementing the alliance between Britain and the Five Nations, that, on any life, I believe he would suffer any man's son to be butchered, rather than risk offending an Indian tribe."

"In his position it may be very difficult for him to act," said Lord H——; "but it might be as well to ascertain his feelings and his views, by asking his advice as to how you should act yourself. Counsel he will be very willing to give, I am sure; and, in the course of conversation, you might discover how much or how little you have to expect from his assistance."

"But you said, my dear Lord, that you were yourself going to Albany to-morrow, to see poor Brooks," observed Mr. Prevost. "I cannot leave Edith here alone."

All three mused for a moment or two, and

Edith, perhaps, deepest of all. At length, however, she said —

“I am quite safe, my father: of that I am certain; and you will be certain too, I am sure, when you remember what I told you of Black Eagle’s conduct to me on that fatal night. He threw his blanket round me, and called me his daughter. Depend upon it, long ere this, the news that I am his adopted child has spread through all the tribes; and no one would dare to lift his hand against me.”

“Still, some precaution,” said Lord H——.

But Edith interrupted him gently, saying, “Stay, George, one moment. Let my father answer. Do you not think, dear father, that I am quite safe? In a word, do you not believe that I could go from lodge to lodge, as the adopted daughter of Black Eagle, throughout the whole length of the Long House of the Five Nations without the slightest risk or danger? and, if so, why should you fear?”

“I do indeed believe you could;” replied

Mr. Prevost. "Oh that we could have extracted such an act from the chief towards poor Walter. What Edith says is right, my Lord : we must judge of these Indians as we know them ; and my only fear in leaving her here now, arises from the risk of incursions from the other side of the Hudson."

Lord H—— mused a little. It struck him there was something strange in Edith's way of putting the question to her father—something too precise, too minute, to be called for by any of the words which had been spoken. It excited nothing like suspicion in his mind ; for it was hardly possible to look into the face, or hear the tones, of Edith Prevost, and entertain distrust. But it made him doubt, whether she had not some object, high and noble he was sure, but beyond the immediate point, which she did not think fit as yet to reveal.

"I was about to say," he replied at length to the last words of Mr. Prevost, "that I can

easily move a guard up here sufficient to protect the house ; and I need not tell you, my dear Sir," he continued, taking Edith's hand, "that as the whole treasure of my happiness is here, I would not advise you to leave her for an hour unless I felt sure she would be safe. I will send down by some of the men, who are still in the house, an order to Captain Hammond to march a guard here as early as possible to-morrow morning, under a trustworthy sergeant. As soon as it arrives, I will set out for Albany ; and I think you can go to Johnson's Castle in perfect security."

So it was arranged ; and all parties felt no inconsiderable relief ; when some course of action was thus decided. Effort in this world is everything. Even the waters of joy will stagnate ; and the greatest relief to care or sorrow, the strongest support in danger or adversity, is effort.

CHAPTER IV.

THE morning of the following day broke fresh and beautiful. A bright clearness was in the sky—a brisk elasticity in the air—that had not been seen or felt for weeks. Everything looked sparkling, and sharp, and distinct. Distances were diminished; woods and hills, which had looked dim, seemed near and definite; and the whole world appeared in harmony with energy and effort. The heavy rains of the preceding morning had cleared the over-charged atmosphere, as tears will sometimes relieve the loaded breast; and when Lord H—— and Mr. Prevost mounted their horses to set out, it seemed as if the invigorating air had restored to the latter

the firmness and courage of which the grief and horror of the preceding day had deprived him.

Edith embraced her father, and gave her cheek to the warm touch of her lover's lips ; and then she watched them as they rode away, till the wood shut them out from her sight.

The soldiers were by this time installed in the part of the house destined for them ; and some of the negroes were busy in preparing for their accommodation ; but old Agrippa, and the gardener's boy and a woman servant, stood near, watching their master and his guest as they departed.

As soon as the little party was out of sight, however, Edith turned to Agrippa, and said—

“Send Chando to me in the parlor : I wish to speak with him.”

When the man appeared, she gazed at him earnestly, saying—

“How far is it to Oneida creek, Chando ?—have you ever been there ?”

"Ah, yes, Missy, often, when I was little boy. Why, you know, my fadder run away and live with Ingins long time—'cause he had bad master. But Ingins cuff him and thump him more nor worst massa in de world, and so he come back again. How far be it? Oh, long way; twice so far as Johnson Castle, or more—oh yes, tree time so far."

Edith knew how vague a negro's ideas of distance are; and she then put her question in a form which would get her a more distinct answer.

"Bethink you, Chando," she said, "how long it would take me to reach the lake—how long it would take any one. Consider it well, and let me know."

"You, Missy, you!" cried the negro, in great astonishment; "*you* never think of going there?"

"I don't know, Chando," she replied; "it might be needful; and I wish to know how long it would take."

“Dat ’pend upon how you go, Missy,” returned the man. “Ride so far as Johnson Castle; but can’t ride no farder. Den walk as I walk? You never do dat; and, if you do, take you five day, and walk hard too.”

Poor Edith’s heart sank.

“Otaitsa walks,” she said, in a desponding tone; “but, it is true, she can do much that I cannot do.”

“*She* walk! Oh dee no, Missy,” replied the negro; “she walk little bit o’ way from what dey call Wood Creek, or from de Mohawk. She walk no farder. All de rest she go in canoe, sometimes on Mohawk, sometimes on lake, sometimes on creek. She come here once in tree day. I hear old Grey Buzzard, de pipe-bearer, say that, time when de Sachem came wid his warriors.”

“And can I do the same?” asked Edith, eagerly.

“Sure you can if you get canoe,” answered Chando; “but oh, Missy, tink ob de Ingins.

Dey kidnap Massa Walter—dey kill you too.”

“There is no fear, Chando,” replied Edith. “Even my father owns that I could safely go from one lodge to another through the whole land of the Five Nations, because Black Eagle has put his blanket round me, and made me his daughter.”

“Massa know best,” said Chando; “but, if so, why dey kidnap Massa Walter?”

“Black Eagle refused to make him his son, or my father his brother,” said Edith, with the tears rising in her eyes. “But the truth, Chando, is, that I go to try if I can save poor Walter’s life—I go to tell the Blossom that they hold *my* Walter, *her* Walter, a prisoner, and see whether we cannot find means to rescue him.”

“I see—I see, Missy,” said the man, gravely; and then, after pausing for a moment, he asked, abruptly—“I go with you?”

“Some one I must have to show me the

way," replied Edith. "Are you afraid, Chando?"

"Afraid!" cried the man, bursting into a fit of joyous laughter. "Oh no, not afraid: Ingins no hurt nigger—kick him, cuff him, no scalp him, cause nigger got no scalp-lock. Ha, ha, ha! I go help save Massa Walter. He never hab no good ting, but he give Chando some. Oh, I manage all for you. We find plenty canoe—Mohawk canoe—Oneida canoe—if we say you Black Eagle's daughter going to see you sister Otaitsa. When you go, Missy?"

"Very soon, Chando," replied Edith.

She then proceeded to explain to him her plan still farther. She said that she wished to set out that very day, and as soon as possible, in order first to communicate the tidings of Walter's capture to Otaitsa without delay, and secondly to save her father as many hours of anxiety as possible. She did not absolutely tell the man that she had not informed her

father of her intention ; but he divined it well.

Nevertheless, when he heard somewhat more at large the conduct of Black Eagle towards her on the night of poor Walter's capture, he was quite satisfied of her safety, as far as the Indians were concerned. He urged her, however, to go, in the first place, to Johnson Castle, where she could procure a canoe, or even a *batteau*, he felt certain ; and it was long before he comprehended her objection to that course. At length, however, his usual "I see—I see," showed that he had caught a light ; and then he was soon ready with his resources.

"Den we walk to de nearest end of little pond : only tree mile," he said ; "fishing canoe all ready. Next we go down little pond, and de creek, into lake ; keep by nort side, and den walk to Mohawk, tree mile more. I carry canoe cross on my back. Den, Ingin or no Ingin, we get along. If Missy like to take

oder nigger too, we get on very fast, and he carry bundle."

"I must have one of the women with me," said Edith, in a thoughtful tone; "but which?"

The negro's countenance fell a little. He was very proud of the confidence placed in him, and he did not like to share it with a white woman. His tone, then, was rather dejected, though submissive, when he asked—

"Do Missy take white woman Sally wid her?—Sally no walk—Sally no run—Sally no paddle, when Chando is tired."

"No," replied Edith, at once. "I can take no white person with me, Chando, for it would risk her life; and, even to save my poor brother, I must not lure another into such peril. One of your color, Chando, they will not hurt; for it is a white man's blood they will have for a white man's act."

"Then take sister Bab!" cried Chando, rubbing his hands with the peculiar low negro

chuckle. "Sister Bab walk, run, carry bundle, and twirl paddle, wid anybody."

Now, Bab was a stout negro woman of about forty years of age, with a pleasant countenance, and very fine white teeth, who rejoiced in the cognomen of sister, though, to the best of Edith's knowledge, she was sister to no one in the house, at least. Her usual occupations were in the farm-yard, the dairy, and the pigsty ; so that Edith had not seen very much of her. But all that she had seen was pleasant ; for sister Bab seemed continually on the watch to do everything for everybody, receiving all orders even from "Massa Walter," who was sometimes a little inconsiderate, with a broad, good-humored grin. Her constant activity and indefatigable energy, promised well for an undertaking such as that in which Edith was engaged.

"Well, Chando," said the young lady, "I do not know that I could make a better choice. Send sister Bab to me ; for where dangers

such as these are to to be encountered, I will not take any woman without her own free consent."

"Oh she go; I talk wid her," said Chando; "you nebber trouble yourself, Missy. She go to world's end wid Miss Edith, and fight like debbel, if dere be need. I nebber saw woman so good at catching fish; she'll hook 'em out like cabbages."

"That also may be useful to us," said Edith, with a faint smile. "But, send her to me, Chando; I must speak with her before we go."

The good woman, when she came, made not the slightest objection, but, on the contrary, looked upon the expedition as something very amusing, which would give her relief to the tedium of her daily labors, and at the same time afford full occupation for her active spirit. She was as ready with suggestions as Chando; told Edith everything she had best take with her; detailed all her own proposed prepara-

tions, and even begged for a rifle, declaring that she was as good a shot as "Massa Walter," and had often fired his gun when he had brought it home undischarged.

Edith declined, however, to have a rifle-woman in her train ; and, having told her two chosen attendants that she would be ready in an hour, retired to make her preparations, and write a few lines to her father and her lover, to account for her absence when they returned. Both letters were brief ; but we will only look at that which she left for Mr. Prevost.

"My dear father," she wrote, "I am half afraid I am doing wrong in taking the step I am about to take, without your knowledge or approbation ; but I cannot sit still and do nothing, while all are exerting themselves to save my dear brother. I feel that it is absolutely necessary to any hope of his safety, that Otaitsa should be informed immediately of his situation.

"It may be months before any Indian runner

is found, and meanwhile my poor brother's fate may be sealed. Were it to cost my life, I should think myself bound to go ; but I am the only one who can go in perfect safety ; for, while promising his protection to me, and insuring me against all danger, the Black Eagle refused to give any assurance in regard to others. You have yourself acknowledged, my dear father, that I shall be perfectly safe ; and I have also the advantage of speaking the Indian language well. In these circumstances, would it not be wrong—would it not be criminal—in me to remain here idle, when I have even a chance of saving my poor brother ? Forgive me, then, if I do wrong, on account of the motives which lead me.

“ My course is straight to the Mohawk, by the little pond and the lake, and then up the Mohawk and Wood Creek, as far as they will carry me, for, wishing to save myself as much fatigue as possible, I shall venture to take the canoe from the pond.

“ I have asked Chando and sister Bab to accompany me, as I know you would wish me to have protection and assistance on the way in case of any difficulty. I hope to be back in six days at the farthest ; and, if possible, I will send a runner to inform you of my safe arrival amongst the Oneidas.

“ Once more, my dear father, think of the great object I have in view, and forgive your affectionate daughter.”

When her letters were written, Edith dressed herself in a full Indian costume, which had been given her by Otaitsa ; and a beautiful Indian maiden she looked, though the skin was somewhat too fair, and the hair wanted the jetty black. In the Indian pouch or wallet, she placed some articles of European convenience, and a hunter's large knife. Then making up a small package of clothes for sister Bab to carry, she descended to the lower story.

Here, however, she met with some impediments which she had not expected. The news

of her proposed expedition had spread through the whole household, and caused almost an open revolt. The white women were in tears; old Agrippa was clamorous; and the fat black cook declared loudly that Miss Edith was mad and should not go. So far indeed did she carry her opposition, that the young lady was obliged to assume a stern and severe tone which was seldom heard in Edith's voice, and command her to retire at once from her presence. The poor woman was instantly overawed, for her courage was not very permanent; and, bursting into tears, she left the room, declaring she was sure she should never see Miss Edith again.

Edith then gave all the keys of the house to old Agrippa, with the two letters which she had written. Chando took up the bag of provisions which he had prepared; sister Bab charged herself with the packet of clothes, and Edith, walking between them, turned away from her father's house, amidst the tears of the

white women, and a vociferous burst of grief from the negroes.

Her own heart sank for a moment, and she asked herself—

“Shall I ever pass that threshold again? Shall I ever be pressed hereafter in the arms of those I so much love?”

But she banished such feelings, and drove away such thoughts ; and, murmuring—

“My brother—my poor brother !” she walked on.

CHAPTER V.

LEAVING Edith to pursue her way towards the Oneida territory, and Mr. Prevost, after parting with Lord H—— at the distance of two miles from his own house, to ride on to Johnson Castle, let us follow the nobleman to Albany, where he arrived somewhat after nightfall. His first duty, as he conceived it, led him to the quarters of the Commander-in-Chief, where he made a brief but clear report of all that had occurred in his transactions with the Indians.

“I found,” he wrote, “from information communicated by Sir William Johnson, that there was no need of any concealment; but, on

the contrary, that it would be rather advantageous to appear at the meeting with the Five Nations in my proper character. The results were what I have told you. There is one other point, however, which I think it necessary to mention, and which, if imprudently treated, might lead to serious results."

He then went on to state generally the facts in regard to the death of the Indian by the hands of Woodchuck, and the supposed capture of Walter Prevost by a party of the Oneidas.

It would be uninteresting to the reader to hear the particulars of the conversation which followed. Suffice it to say that the government of the colony in all its departments was very well disposed to inactivity at that time, and not at all inclined to exert itself for the protection of individuals, or even of greater interests, unless strongly pressed to do so. This, Lord H—— was not at all inclined to do, as he was well aware, from all he had heard,

that no action on the part of the government, short of the sudden march of a large body of troops, could effect the liberation of Walter Prevost, and that to expect such a movement, which itself might be unsuccessful, was quite out of the question with the officers who were in command at the time.

His conference with the Commander-in-Chief being ended, he declined an invitation to supper, and went out on his search for the small inn where he had been told he would find the man whose act, however justifiable, had brought so much wretchedness upon Mr. Prevost's family.

The city of Albany in those days, (as we have reason to know from very good authority), though not numbering, by many thousands, as large a population as it now contains, occupied a space nearly as large as the present city. One long street ran by the bank of the river, to the very verge of which, beautiful and well-cultivated gardens extended ; and from the

top of the hill down to this lower street, ran another, very nearly, if not exactly, of the same position and extent as the present State Street. On the summit of the hill was the fort; and, built in the centre of the large descending street, which swept round them on either side, were two or three churches, a handsome market-place, and a guard-house. A few other streets ran down the hill in a parallel line with this principal one; and some small streets, lanes, and alleys, connected them all together.

Nevertheless, the population, as I have said, was, comparatively, very small; for, between house and house and street and street, throughout the whole town, were large and beautiful gardens, filling up spaces now occupied by buildings, and thronged with human beings.

A great part of the population was, at that time, Dutch; and all the neatness and cleanliness of true Dutch houses and Dutch streets were to be seen in Albany in those days—would

we could say as much at present! No pigs then ran in the streets, to the horror of the eye and the annoyance of the passenger; no cabbage-leaves or stalks disgraced the gutter; and the only place in which anything like filth or uncleanness was to be seen, was at the extremity of the littoral street, where naturally the houses of the boatmen and others connected with the shipping were placed for the sake of approximating to the water. Here certainly some degree of filth existed; and the air was perfumed with a high savor of tar and tobacco.

It was towards this part of the town that Lord H—— directed his course, inquiring for the inn called “The Three Boatmen.” Several times, however, was he frustrated, in his attempt to obtain information by the ignorance of the English language, shown by a great portion of the inhabitants; and the pipe was removed from the mouth only to reply, in Dutch—“I do not understand.”

At length, however, he was directed aright, and found a small and somewhat mean-looking house, in which an adventurous Englishman, from the purlieus of Clare-market, had established a tavern for the benefit of boatmen. It had, in former times, belonged to a Dutch settler, and still retained many of the characteristic features of its origin. Four trees stood in line before the doors, with benches underneath them, for the convenience of those who liked to sit and poison the sweet air of the summer evenings with the fumes of tobacco.

Entering through a swing-door into the narrow, sandy passage, which descended one step from the street, Lord H—— encountered a negro tapster with a white apron, of whom he enquired if Captain Brooks were still there.

“Oh, yes, massa officer,” said the man, with a grin. “You mean massa Woodchuck,” he continued, showing that the good man’s Indian

nick-name was very extensively known. "You find him in dere, in de coffee-room." And he pointed to a door, once white, now yellow and brown with smoke, age, and dirty fingers.

Lord H—— opened the door, and went in amongst as strange and unprepossessing an assemblage of human beings as it had ever been his chance to light upon. The air was rendered obscure by smoke, so that the candles looked dim and red; and it was literally difficult to distinguish the objects round. What the odour was, it is impossible to say, for it was as complicated as the antidote of Mithridates; but the predominant smells were certainly those of tobacco, beer, rum, and Hollands gin. Some ten or twelve little tables of exceedingly highly polished mahogany, but stained here and there by the contaminating marks of wet glasses, divided the room amongst them, leaving just space between each two to place a couple of chairs back to back.

In this small den, not less than five or six-

and-twenty persons were congregated, almost all drinking, almost all smoking, some talking very loud, some sitting in profound silence, as the quantity of liquor imbibed, or the national characteristics of the individual, might prompt.

Gazing through the haze upon this scene, which, besides the sturdy and coarse, but active, Englishman, and the heavy, phlegmatic Dutchman, contained one or two voluble Frenchmen, deserters from the Canadas, and none of them showing themselves in a very favorable light, Lord H—— could not help comparing the people before him with the free wild Indians he had lately left, and asking himself “Which are the savages?”

At length, his eye fell upon a man sitting at a table in the corner of the room next to the window. He was quite alone, with his back turned to the rest of the men in the place, his head leaning on his hand, and a short pipe laid down upon the table beside him. He had no light before him as most of the others had, and

he might have seemed asleep, so still was his whole figure, had it not been that the fingers of his right hand, which rested on the table, beat time to an imaginary tune.

Approaching close to him, Lord H—— drew a seat to the table, and laid a hand upon his arm. Woodchuck looked round, and a momentary expression of pleasure, slight and passing away rapidly, crossed his rugged features.

The next moment, his face was all cold and stern again.

“Very kind of you to come and see me, my Lord,” he said, in a dull, sad tone. “What do you want with me? Have you got anything for me to do?”

“I am sorry to see you looking so melancholy, Captain,” said Lord H——, evading his question. “I hope nothing else has gone amiss.”

“Hav’n’t I cause enough to be melancholy,” said the other, looking round at the people in

the room, "cooped up with a penful of swine? Come out—come out to the door. It's cold enough there; but the coldest wind that ever blew is better than the filthy air of these pigs."

As he spoke, he rose; and a little, pert-looking Frenchman, who had overheard him, exclaimed, in a bantering tone—

"Why you call us pigs more nor yourself, de great hog?"

"Get out of my way, for fear I break your back," muttered Woodchuck, in a low, stern voice. "If your neck had been broken long ago, it would have been better for your country and for mine." And taking up the little Frenchman by the nape of the neck with one arm, he set him upon the table from the side which he had just risen.

A roar of laughter burst from a number of the assembled guests; the little Frenchman spluttered his wrath without daring to carry the expression of his indignation farther; and

Woodchuck strode quietly out of the room, followed by his military visitor.

“Here, let us sit down here,” he said, placing himself on a bench under a leafless tree, and leaving room for Lord H—— by his side. “I am gloomy enough, my Lord, and hav’n’t I reason to be so? Here I am for life. This is to be my condition, with the swine that gather up in these pig-sties of cities—suffocating in such dens as we have just left. I guess I shall drown myself some day, when I am druv quite mad. I know a man has no right to lay hands upon himself. I larnt my Bible when I was young, and know what’s God’s will; so I shan’t do anything desperate so long as I am right here.” And he laid his finger on his forehead. “No, no, I’ll just take as much care of my life,” he continued, “as though it were a baby I was nursing; but, unless them Ingians catch some other white man, and kill him—which God forbid—I’ve got to stop here for life; and even if they do, it’s more nor a

chance they'd kill me too, if they got me ; and when I think of them beautiful woods, and the pleasant lakes with the pictures of everything round painted so beautiful on 'em, when they are still, and the streams that go dancing and splashing along over the big black stones and the little white pebbles, seeming for all the world to sing as if for pleasure at their freedom, and the open friendly air of the hill-side, and the clouds skimming along, and the birds glancing through the branches, and the squirrels skipping and chattering, as if they were mocking everything not so nimble as themselves, I do often believe I shall go crazed to think I shall never see those things again."

Lord H—— felt for him much ; for he had a sufficient portion of love in his own heart for the wilder things of nature, to sympathize in some degree with one who loved them so earnestly.

"I trust, Woodchuck," he said, "that we shall be able to find some employment for you

with the army—if not with my own corps, with some other, which may give you glimpses, at least, of the scenes you love so well, and of the unconfined life you have lived so long. But I have come to consult you upon a subject of much and immediate importance, and we must talk of that the first thing.”

“What is it?” asked Brooks, in an indifferent tone, fixing his eyes upon the stones of the street, faintly lighted by the glare from within the house.

Lord H—— began his account of what had happened between the Mohawk and the Hudson, with some circumlocution; for he did not feel at all sure of the effect it would produce upon his companion’s mind; and the Woodchuck seemed to fall into one of those deep reveries in which one may be said to hear without hearing. He took not the slightest notice of what his noble visitor said regarding the burning of the wood or the danger of Mr. Prevost and Edith. It seemed to produce no

more distinct effect than would the wind whistling in his ears. He sat calm and silent without an observation ; but he grew more attentive, though only in a slight degree, when the narrator came to mention the anxiety of the family at the protracted absence of Walter.

When, at last, Lord H—— described the finding of the knife and the knapsack, and told of the conclusions to which the whole family had come, he started up, exclaiming—“What’s that, what’s that?” Then after a moment’s pause, he sank down upon his seat again, saying, with a groan, “They have got him—they have got him, and they will tomahawk him—the bloody, barbarous critturs ! Couldn’t they have chosen some more worthless thing than that ?”

Pressing his hand tightly upon his forehead, as if he fancied the turbulent thoughts within would burst it, he remained for a moment or two in silence, till Lord H—— asked if he

imagined they would execute their bloody purposes speedily.

“No, no,” cried the man; “no fear of that; they’ll take time enough, that’s the worst of the savages. It’s no quick rage, no angry heat, with them—no word and a blow. It’s cold, bitter, long-premeditated hatred. They wouldn’t have half the pleasure if they didn’t draw out their revenge by the week or the month. But what’s to be done now?—gracious God, what’s to be done now?”

“That is precisely what I came to consult you upon,” said Lord H——. “But let us talk over the matter calmly, my good friend. This is a case where grief, anger, and indignation, can do nothing; but where deliberate thought, reason, and policy, even cunning such as their own (for, if we could arrive at it, we should be quite justified in using it) may perhaps, do something to save this poor boy.”

“How the devil would you have me calm?” exclaimed the man, vehemently; but then,

suddenly checking himself, he said, "you're right—you're right! I am forgetting my old habits in these smoky holes. Thought, cunning, those are the only things to do with an Indian. It's tarnation hard to outwit him, but it may be done when one knows his tracks well. I can't get my brain to hold steady to-night. This story's upset all my thoughts; and I've got no consideration in me. You must give me a night and a day to think over the matter; and then I'll see what's to be done. By the Lord, Walter shan't die! Poor fellow! what should *he* die for?—However, I guess it's no use talking in that sort of manner. I must think of what's to be done—that's the business in hand. I'll think as soon as I can, my Lord; only you just tell me now all you have done, if you have done anything. As for Prevost, I don't suppose he's had time to do much; for though he is always right in the end, and no man's opinion is worth more, yet, if you touch his heart and his feelings, as you call them,

his wits get all in a work, just like mine at this moment. More fool he, and I too."

"We have done something," said Lord H——, in reply. "Mr. Prevost set out this morning to see Sir William Johnson."

"*He* is no good," growled Woodchuck, impatiently.

"I came hither to consult with you," continued Lord H——; "and we have commissioned the boatman, whom they call Robert, a tall, stout man—"

"I know him—I know him," interposed Woodchuck; "passably honest—the best of them."

"Well, we have commissioned him," resumed the nobleman, "to seek for some Indian runner, or half-breed, to carry news of this event to Otaitsa, whom Edith believes the tribe will keep in the dark in regard to the capture of Walter."

"Likely—likely," said the Woodchuck. "Miss Prevost understands them; they'll not

tell the women anything, for fear they should meddle. They've a poor opinion of squaws. But the girl may do a great deal of good, too, if you can get the tidings to her. She's not as cunning as the rest of them, but she has more heart, and soul, and resolution too, than a whole tribe of Indian women. That comes of her mother being a white woman."

"Her mother a white woman!" exclaimed Lord H——.

"Ay, didn't you know that?" interrogated Woodchuck; "just as white as Miss Prevost; and quite a lady, too, she was to look at, or to speak to—though she was not fond of speaking with white men, and would draw back into the lodge whenever she saw one. I did speak to her once, though, when she was in a great fright about Black Eagle, who had gone to battle against the French; and I, happening to come that way, gave her some news of him. But we are getting astray from what's of more matter than that. The girl will save him, take

my word for it, if there's strength enough in that little body to do it. But let me see. You talk of Indian runners. Where is one to be found who can be trusted? They're generally a bad set, the scum of the tribes. No real warrior would take up on such a trade. However, what's to be done? No white person can go; for they'll scalp him to a certainty, and he would give his life for Walter's, that's all. On my life, it would be as well to give the dangerous errand to some felon, as I have heard say they do in despotic countries—give criminals some dangerous task to perform; and then, if they succeed and escape, so much the better for them; if they die, so much the better for the community. But I'm getting wandering again," he continued, rising. "Now, my Lord, this is no use. Give me a few hours to think—to-morrow, at noon, if you will—and then I'll come and tell you what my opinion is."

As he spoke, he turned abruptly towards the

house, without any ceremonious leave-taking, and only looked round to put one more question.

“At the post, I suppose?” he said.

Lord H—— assented, Brooks entered the house, and at once sought his own chamber.

CHAPTER VI.

IN a small room, under a roof which slanted not in one straight line, but made an obtuse angle in the midst of its descent, lighted alone by a horn-lantern, such as was used on board the river-boats at night, sat the stout man whom we have described under the name of Woodchuck. The furniture of the chamber was of the meanest kind: a small half-tester bed, with its dull curtains of a broad red and white checked stuff; a little table jammed close against the wall; a solitary chair; a wash-stand, with the basin and its ewer both somewhat maimed; and a little looking-glass,

hanging from a nail driven into the wall, with its narrow, badly-gilt frame, and its plate so distorted, that, when one looked in it, the reflection seemed to be making faces at the original. Dull, with imbibing many a year's loaded atmosphere, were those faded walls; and many a guest had written upon them in pencil his own name, or the name of his sweetheart—permanent memorials of transitory tenants, like the long cherished memories of affections gone to the grave. There were two or three rude distiches, too, and a quatrain somewhat more polished.

But the man who sat there noted none of these things. The dim light, the gloomy aspect of the apartment, might sink in upon his spirit, and render the darkness within more dark: the strange, ill-looking, double slant of the ceiling—the obtrusive two straight lines instead of one, with the blunt, unmeaning angle between them, giving an aspect of brokenness to the roof, as if it were ready to

bulge out, and then crash down—might irritate without his knowing why. Still he noted them not with anything like observation. His mind was busy with things of its own—things in which feeling took a share as well as thought—and he was, if not dead, sleeping to the external world. Even his beloved woods, and streams, and fresh air, and open skies, were forgotten for the time.

He argued with himself a case of conscience hard to solve.

He was as brave a man as ever lived—had been habituated all his life to perils of many kinds, and had met them all fearlessly. Wake him in the woods at midnight, you would find him ready. Deafen his ear with the drum, or the war-whoop, you could not make him start. He blinked not at the cannon's flash or the blaze of the lightning, and would have faced the fiery-mouthed platoon without a wavering step.

And yet the love of life was strong in him.

He had so many joys in the bright treasury of nature ; to his simple—nay, wild—tastes, there were so many pleasures in the wide world, that to part with them was hard, very hard.

He had never known how valuable earthly existence was to him till that hour, or how different a thing it is to hazard it in bold daring, or to contemplate the throwing it away in reckless passion, or disappointment, or despair, to calmly and deliberately laying it down as a sacrifice, whatever be the end, the inducement, or the duty.

What was the case of conscience, he proposed to himself? Simply this: Whether he should suffer another to die for his act, or place himself not only in the peril from which he had lately escaped, but in the actual grasp of death.

Some men, of enthusiastic spirit and great constitutional fearlessness, might have decided the matter at a dash, and, with the first impulse of a furious nature, have cast themselves under

the uplifted tomahawk to save their innocent friend. But he was not such ; and I do not intend so to represent him. He was not a man to do anything without deliberation, without calculating all things, though he was generous as most men, as this world goes. All his habits—the very course of his previous life—disposed him to careful forethought. Every day had had its watchfulness, every hour its precaution. The life of the woods in those days was a life of peril and preparation, where forethought might be very rapid, but was always needful.

And now he debated the question with himself :

“ Could he live on and suffer Walter Prevost to die in his place ? ”

There were strenuous advocates on both sides. But the love of life was the most subtle, if generosity was the most eloquent.

“ Poor boy ! ” he thought, “ why should he die for what I have done ? Why should he

be cut off so soon from all life's hopes and blessings? Why should his father's eyes be drowned in tears, and his sister's heart wrung with grief, when I can save them all? And he so frank and noble, too—so full of every kindly feeling and generous quality—so brave—so honest—so frank—so true-hearted! Innocent, too—innocent of every offence—quite innocent in this case!”

But then spoke self, and he reflected—

“Am not I innocent, too?—as innocent as he is? Did I ever harm the man? Did I provoke the savage? Did I not slay him in pure self-defence? And shall I lay down the life I then justly protected at the cost of that of another human being, because a race of fierce Indians, unreasoning, blood-thirsty savages, choose to offer a cruel sacrifice to their God of revenge, and have found a victim?”

“Still,” he continued, taking the other side, “it is for my act the sacrifice is offered, and, if there must be a sacrifice, ought not the victim

to be myself? Besides, were it any worthless life that was in jeopardy—were it that of some desperate rover—some criminal—some man without ties, or friendships, or affections—one might leave him to his fate, perhaps, without remorse. But this poor lad, how many hopes are centred in him! what will not his family lose—what will not the world? And I—what am I, that my life should be weighed against his? Is he not my friend, too, and the son of my friend—one who has always overflowed with kindness and regard towards me?”

His resolution was almost taken; but then the cunning pleader, vanquished in direct argument, suggested a self-deceit.

“It is strange,” he thought, “that these Indians, and especially their chief, should fix upon one with whom they have ever been so friendly—should choose a youth whom they have looked upon as a brother, when they might surely have found some other victim. Can this be a piece of their savage cunning?”

They know how well I love the lad, and how much friendship has been shown me by his father. Can they have taken him only as a bait to their trap, without any real intention of sacrificing him, and only in the hope of luring me into their power?"

At first sight, the supposition seemed reasonable; and he was inclined to congratulate himself that he had not precipitately fallen into the snare.

"How they would have yelled with triumph," he thought, "when they found me bringing my head to the hatchet!"

But speedily his knowledge of the Indian character and habits undeceived him. He knew that in such cases they always made sure of some victim, and that the more near and dear he was to the offender, the better for their purpose—the offender himself, first—a relation next—a friend next; and he cast the self-fraud away from him.

But the love of life had not yet done, though

obliged to take another course, and suggest modifications. Was there no middle course to be taken? Was it absolutely necessary that he should sacrifice his own life to save that of Walter Prevost? Could not the object be effected without his giving himself up to the savages? Might not some one else fall into their hands? Might not the lad be rescued by some daring effort? This was the most plausible suggestion of all; but it was the one that troubled him most. He had detected so many attempts in his own heart to cheat himself, that he suspected he might be deceiving himself still; and his mind got puzzled and confused with doubts.

He went to the bed, and lay down in his clothes; but he could not sleep without taking some resolution; and, rising again, he pressed his hands upon his aching temples, and determined to cast away self from the question altogether—to look upon it as if it affected

some other person than Walter Prevost, and to judge accordingly.

This plan succeeded. He separated the truth from the falsehood, and came to the conclusion, that it would be folly to go and give himself up to certain death, so long as there was a chance of saving his young friend by other means ; but that it was right to do so if other means failed ; and that neither by delay, nor by rash and uncertain efforts, must he risk the chance of saving him, even by the ultimate sacrifice.

He accordingly made up his mind to re-enter the Indian territory in spite of every peril ; to conceal himself as best he could ; to watch the Indians as he would watch a wild beast ; and to be ready for any opportunity, or for any decision.

Now that his resolution was finally taken, he lay down and slept profoundly.

CHAPTER VII.

AND what was Edith's journey? Would the reader have me dwell upon the small particulars—speak of it as if she had been taking a morning's walk, and note every bird, and flower, and insect; each smooth valley, or bluff rock? Or would he have me present it as a picture, as it appeared to her after it was over, massed together in its extraordinary rapidity, and seen but from one point at the end? Let us choose the latter plan, although it would be easy to extend the pages of this work by minute descriptions and passing panoramas, such as critics love.

But it is my object only to dwell upon events

which affected the ultimate fate of the principal characters, and not to labor at length upon a mere detail of incidents. In this view of the case, I might say nothing more, but that it began and ended—that she arrived safely at the place of her destination. Yet that journey was to her a matter of much interest; and when it was over, she looked back upon it as a picture full of beautiful and pleasant things.

Swiftly skimming in a bark-canoe over the glassy bosoms of the lakes, which reflected every hue of herb, and tree, and sky, and mountain; darting along bright and sparkling streams, sometimes beneath the overhanging canopy of boughs, sometimes under the pure blue eye of heaven; often struggling with a rapid, often having to pass along the shore to turn a waterfall; at times walking along through the glowing woods, burning with the intense colouring of autumn; at times surrounded by a number of Indians, each rendering quiet, earnest service to the adopted

daughter of the great Oneida chief ; at times wandering on in the dim forest with no one but her two dark attendants near ; now the fierce howl of the midnight wolf sounding in her ear ; now the sharp, garrulous cry of the blue jay, or the shrill scream of the wood-hawk ; now beholding the Indian lodge, or castle, as the Iroquois sometimes called their dwellings ; then the brown canopy of the autumn woods which covered her : such were the principal incidents of her journey.

Still under the skilful guidance, and with the eager help, of the two negroes, she went forward with extraordinary rapidity, leaving miles and miles behind her every hour. It seemed almost like a pleasant dream, or, at least, it would have seemed so, had the sad and fearful motives which led her on been ever banished from her mind. Even as it was, the quick and continued change of place and scene, the variety of the objects, the constant succession of new matters of interest, the events,

small in themselves, but important to her, which occurred to facilitate or impede her progress, were all a relief to her overcharged mind; and she reached the Oneida territory less depressed than when she set out from her home.

One cause, perhaps, of the feeling of renewed strength which she experienced, was the renewal of hope from the conduct of the Indians towards her, wherever she met them. She found that even amongst the Mohawks she was recognized at once as the adopted daughter of the great Oneida chief; and it was evident that he had spread far and wide, as he returned to his own abode after the conference at Johnson Castle, the fact of his having adopted the daughter of the pale-face, Prevost. There is always something, too, in the fact of an enterprise being actually commenced, which gives spirit to pursue it to the end. While we stand and gaze at it from a distance, hesitating whether we shall undertake it or not, the difficulties are magnified—the facilities obscured:

rocks and precipices rise up, threatening to our imagination ; while the small paths by which they may be surmounted are unseen.

Day had yet an hour of life left, when Edith approached what we find called, in the history of the times, "The Castle of the Oneidas." "Wigwam" it is customary to name all the Indian villages, giving an idea of insignificance and meanness, and a completely savage state, which the principal residences of the Five Nations did not at all merit. Most of them were very like that which Edith now approached. It was built upon a slight elevation near the lake, with a large protruding rock close to it ; for the Oneidas always affected near their dwelling some object significant of their favorite appellation, "The Children of the Stone."

Around the "Castle" were high palisades, inclosing a considerable area, within which the huts of the Indians were constructed. Rising considerably above the rest, were two wooden buildings, in the erection of which European

workmanship was apparent. The one was a large oblong building, regularly roofed and shingled like that of any English settler. It consisted of two stories, and in the upper one regular framed windows were to be seen. In the lower story there were none; light being admitted by the door. That lower story, however, was floored with plain pine-boards, and divided by a sort of curtain into two equal compartments.

The other building bore the appearance of a church in miniature, with a small cottage or hut attached, which was, in reality, the residence of the missionary, Mr. Gore. Around the village, or Castle, were wide, well-cultivated fields, which had evidently lately borne maize or some other crops of grain; and let not the reader, acquainted with the habits of Indians as they are at present, be surprised, to find the art of husbandry practised at this period amongst the rude denizens of the forest; for, to the shame of civilized man be it spoken, the

Indians have, assuredly, lost much socially, and gained little religiously, by the intercourse with the white invaders of their country. The crushing weight of despondency, a sort of morbid awe of the superiority of the white race, seems to have beaten down a spirit of enterprise which formerly bid fair to regenerate the people, and to replace them in a position which they probably at one time occupied.

Such, however, as I have described, was the appearance of a large Indian village, or Castle, in the year one thousand seven hundred and fifty-seven ; and we find, from the statements of many an eye-witness, that the wild hunter of the woods, the fierce combatant in the battle, was, in his calmer moments, not at all insensible to many of the advantages and comforts of civilized life. But we refused to lead them on the way ; we used their blood and their energies for our service ; we even bought and profited by their fierce barbarity ; and, instead of giving them, while it was possible, the arts of peace and the benefits of cultivation, we furnished them

with the "fire-water," we "contaminated" them with our vices, and degraded them morally, physically, and intellectually. Great was our offence against our fellow-man; great must be the sin in the eyes of a just God.

The forest had disappeared; all that could be seen appeared as if rolling in grey masses along the distant country. The purple light of evening, increasing in richness every moment as the day declined, spread over the whole scene, and was reflected from the bosom of the lake. Many a light canoe was skimming along over the water, many a one was lying motionless while the Indian fisherman pursued his sport. The blue smoke curled up high and straight in the calm air from the doors of several huts within the inclosure; and, from the maize fields without, the pleasant musical sounds of children's voices was heard, as the young people of the village wandered here and there, gathering up scattered ears of corn, which had fallen in the rude reaping of the harvest. In one place even a song was heard; and, in short, the whole

scene, instead of being one of rude barbarism and fierce, active passion, indicated calm domestic peace, such as is rarely pictured in the common, but exaggerated, descriptions of Indian life. It might serve my purpose better to describe it differently ; but such I find it, and so it must remain.

Even Edith was surprised to find the home of Otaita so different from the ideas conveyed to her by the wandering traders, who, even while carrying on commercial intercourse with the tribes, were in a state of semi-hostility towards the Indians, representing them as bloody savages, and cheating them wherever they could.

Slowly walking on between her two negro companions—for she was tired with a longer walk than usual—Edith approached the open gates of the Castle, and met with no opposition in entering. A tall, handsome warrior passed out, fully clothed in Indian costume, and only distinguished from civilized man by the shaved head and the painfully significant scalp-lock. His step was stately and calm ; and his

air grave and reserved. Twice he turned his eyes upon Edith's face with a look of evident wonder and admiration ; but he took no farther notice, and passed on.

He was the only individual whom she saw on entering the village ; till, after passing through many huts, where women and children were to be seen busily employed, she came in sight of the door of the chief's house, and beheld there a figure seated on the ground quietly engaged in the art of embroidery, after the fashion in which the Indian women so greatly excel. It was a figure which she knew well ; and the tranquil air and easy grace, as well as the quiet, peaceful employment, showed Edith at once that she had not been mistaken in supposing that Otaita was altogether ignorant of the peril of one dear to them both.

As she came near, she heard that the Indian girl, in her happy ignorance, was singing a sweet but somewhat plaintive song ; and, the next moment, Otaita, raising her eyes, beheld

the three figures, and at once perceived that they were not of her people. For a moment, she did not know Edith in her Indian garb; but, when she *did* recognise her, the emotion produced was alarm rather than joy. She felt at once that some great and important event—some occurrence full of peril or of sorrow—must have brought Edith thither. The beautiful lips parted with a tremulous motion; the large, dark eye, Indian in its color, but European in its form, became full of anxiety; the rosy hue of her cheek, which probably had obtained for her the name of the Blossom, faded away; and paleness spread over the clear brown skin.

Starting up, however, she cast the embroidery away from her, and, springing forward, threw her arms round Edith's neck. Then, as her head rested on her fair companion's shoulder, she asked, in a whisper—

“What is it, my sister? There must be a

storm in the sky—there must be lightning in the cloud ! What tempest wind has swept my sister hither ? What flood of sorrow has borne Edith to Otaita ?”

“ Hush !” ejaculated Edith, in a low tone ; for there were some other Indian women near. “ I will tell my sister when no ears can hear but her own. There *is* tempest in the sky. A pine-tree has fallen across the threshold of my father’s house ; and we are sad for fear the hatchet of the woodman should lop all its green branches away. Can I speak with the Blossom speedily and in secret ?”

“ Instantly,” answered Otaita. “ The warriors have all gone forth to hunt, for three days, the bear and the moose. The Black Eagle is with them. There are but three men of deeds in the Castle ; and why they are women now, and go not forth to the hunting with the rest, I cannot tell. But they are little within the palisade—daily they go

forth, and remain absent long. Come in hither, my sister ; for, though few here speak the tongue we speak, it were better not to let the wind hear us."

"Can some of the women give food and lodging to these two negroes?" asked Edith, adding, "They have been well warned, and know that a life depends upon their silence."

Otaitsa called to an elderly Indian woman, who was cooking at the door of a cabin near, and placed Chando and his companion under her charge. She then turned to Edith, saying—

"Come, my sister."

But before they entered the building, Edith inquired if Mr. Gore were there, saying—

"Perhaps he might give us counsel."

"My father sent him away some days ago," answered Otaitsa ; "he will not be back for a month—perhaps longer. I think he sent him to secure him from danger."

“ Alas !” exclaimed Edith, “ that the danger should have fallen on others !”

“ Alas, alas !” cried Otaita.

And Edith felt her hand tremble much as she led her into the building.

CHAPTER VIII.

A STAIRCASE, rude indeed, but still a staircase, led from the more barn-like part of the building below to the upper floor; and in this respect appeared the first difference between this house—for it deserved the name—and the lodge, or Castle, of King Hendrick the younger, though both had been built by European workmen, and that of King Hendrick at the cost of the British government, which was not the case with the dwelling of the Oneida chief. As soon, however, as you reached the upper floor, the differences became more frequent and more remarkable. It was partitioned off in to separate rooms, with regular doors to them.

When Edith entered the chamber of Otaitsa, she saw at once her tendency to European habits. Of rude manufacture, but still very correct as imitations, and not without a certain degree of uncouth ornament, were chairs, tables, writing materials, a bedstead and a bed; and from wooden pegs driven into the partition depended a few drawings, some colored, some in pencil, but all very different from the gaudy daubs which, at a later period, pedlars were accustomed to take into the Indian territory as articles of barter.

As Edith's eye glanced round the room, she gleaned a general notion of all these things; but her mind was too full of deeper and sadder thoughts to suffer even curiosity to turn it from its course for a moment.

"There is no one in any other chamber here," said Otaitsa. "None comes up those stairs but myself and my father. Now, Edith, speak; for Otaitsa's heart is very heavy, and

her mind misgives her sadly. Is it your father they have taken?"

"No, oh no!" answered Edith; "but one as dear."

She then went on briefly to relate all that had occurred, endeavouring to soften and prepare the way for intelligence which she feared would affect the Indian girl much. But Otaita darted at her own conclusions, divining the whole truth almost as soon as the words were spoken. She was far more affected than Edith had anticipated. She cast herself upon her fair companion's neck, and wept aloud.

"He was mine, Edith," she exclaimed, in the full confidence of sorrow. "He was mine—my betrothed—my loved! And they have hidden it from me—hidden it from all the Indian women here; for they knew that every one in the tribe loved him—though not as well as I. Where was the poor wanderer who passed your house with her infant on her back, who did not receive kindness from Walter Prevost?—where

was the Indian girl who could say he did not treat her with as kindly gentleness as the highest white woman in the land? He was the tree which had grown up to shelter the hut of the woodman, giving him cool shade and comfort in the days of summer and of gladness, to be cut down and burnt for fire when the winter winds are singing in the bare branches. Oh, my brother—my brother! bad is the return they make thee, and hard the measure that they deal! But shall Otaitsa suffer this?" she cried, rising vehemently, and casting her arms abroad. "Shall the Black Eagle let the ravens pick out the eyes of his young in his own nest? No, my sister, no! they shall take Otaitsa's blood first—they shall shake the Blossom from the old bough that is no longer able to bear it up against the winds of Heaven. If the Black Eagle can no longer protect even his daughter's husband, let him cast away the tomahawk—let him lay down the rifle, and be a woman amongst the chiefs of his people!"

It was impossible, for some minutes, to stop Otaitsa's vehement burst of passionate sorrow; but, at length, Edith succeeded in somewhat calming her, beseeching her to still her agitation and anger, and to bend her whole mind to the consideration of what means could best be used to discover whither Walter had been taken, and to rescue him from the peril in which he was placed.

As soon as Otaitsa could listen, however, or rather as soon as she caught the sense of Edith's words, and appreciated their importance, it is wonderful how rapidly she became calm, stilled all the strong and struggling emotions in her heart, and directed every effort and energy of her spirit to the one great object before her. Enough of the Indian blood flowed along her veins—enough of Indian characteristics had been acquired in early youth—to give her a portion of that strong, stoical self-command which characterized the Indian warrior, rather than the woman of the

race. The first burst of grief and indignation showed the woman, and, perhaps, in some degree, not the pure Indian ; but, the moment after, those who knew the character of the Five Nations best, might have supposed her, not only a pure Indian, but a man, and a chief, so quietly did she reason upon, and ponder, the means of accomplishing her purpose. She remained at first, for two or three minutes, in perfect silence, revolving all the circumstances in her mind, and calculating every chance. Then she said—

“The first thing, Edith, is for you to go back to your poor father—not that you are in any danger here ; but it were well, if possible, that no one knew you had been with me, at least till I have discovered where they have hid our poor brother. The women here will all aid me, and never part their lips if I desire them not ; for, though the men think they are very shrewd in hiding the secrets of the nation from their wives and daughters, the women, when

they please, can be as secret and as resolute too. At all events, whether your coming be known or not, it would be better you should go back before the chief's return. They have gone forth to hunt, they say ; but whether it be the black bear, or the brown deer, or the white man, is in great doubt, dear Edith. At all events, they will not know the object of your coming. They may suspect, and probably will, that you came to inquire for your brother ; but, knowing that I was ignorant of his capture, and am still ignorant of where they keep him, they will think you have gone back disappointed and in sorrow, and leave me unwatched to act as I will."

"But can I do nothing to aid?" asked Edith. "Remember, dearest Blossom, what it is to remain inactive and ignorant, while the fate of one so near and so dear hangs in the balance."

"You shall not remain in ignorance, dear Edith," replied Otaitisa. "With every possible opportunity, (and I will find many), my sister

shall know what the Blossom does, and, if there be any way by which you could give help, you shall have instant tidings. At present I know not what is to be done to save our Walter from the power of the Snake. I know not even what they have decided themselves, or whether they have taken any decision; and I have much to think of, much to do. I must seek out those in whom I can place confidence; I must employ many to obtain me information; I must buy some, consult with others, and then judge what is to be done. You can rest here, my Edith, for this day; but to-morrow you must speed home again. But be sure of one thing; my tribe shall know that if Walter dies, Otaitsa will die too."

"That is no consolation," cried Edith, throwing her arms round her neck, with tears in her eyes; "oh, do not threaten anything rash, dear Blossom. Remember you are a Christian; and many things are forbidden to Christians, as a sin, which are regarded as virtues by pagan nations."

“No threat can be rash, no threat can be a sin,” answered Otaitsa, “which may save a life, innocent, and good, and noble. I would not willingly offend, my sister; but my heart is open to God; and he will judge me in mercy, seeing my motives. And now, dear sister, sit you here, and I will send you food, such as we poor Indians eat. I myself may be away for a time, for there must be no delay; but I will return as soon as possible; and you shall know all that is done before you go. Do these blacks who are with you understand the Indian tongue?”

“One of them certainly does,” replied Edith; “that is to say, the language of the Mohawks.”

“’Tis the same,” returned Otaitsa, “or nearly the same. We may have altered a little; but, amongst the Five Nations, he who speaks one tongue, understands all. Is it the man or the woman? and can we trust?”

“It is the man,” answered Edith; “and I do believe he can be trusted.”

“Then I go,” resumed Otaitsa.

And, leaving Edith, she descended to the room below, and then issued forth amongst the Indian huts, gliding from one to another, and stopping generally for a few moments at those lodges before which was to be seen a high pole, bearing the ghastly trophies with which the Indians signalized the death of an enemy.

Strange, that with one so gentle and so kind, with one taught Christianity from her youth, and imbued with many notions different from those of the rest of her people, the horrid sight of human scalps, parched by the sun and dangling in the wind, produced no appearance of horror or disgust. In truth, she hardly saw them, and looked upon the pole and its cruel trophies merely as an indication that there dwelt a famous warrior of the tribe.

Edith in the meanwhile remained for some

time in sad meditation. During her rapid journey from the neighbourhood of the Hudson, not more than thirty miles from Lake Horicon, to the Oneida Lake, she had had little leisure for thought. It had passed almost as a dream, full of confused objects and feelings, but with little like reflection in it.

The sun was by this time disappearing beyond the western extremity of the lake, but still sufficiently above the gently sloping ground, to pour a long stream of glorious light over the placid waters ; and Edith, seated near the window, gazed over the calm and beautiful scene with that solemn feeling—that echo of the voice from another world—which seems to rise in every sensitive heart at the death of each new day. Something gone ! something gone to eternity ! another day on its twelve golden wings taking flight to the infinite and the irrevocable, bearing with it to the dark treasury of Fate an infinite mass and multitude of deeds, and thoughts, and feelings,

crimes, offences, virtuous acts, and little kindnesses, human charities, and human passions, wishes, hopes, joys, sorrows, disappointments, and regrets: the smiles and tears of a whole world, gone with the departing day. Sad and solemn is that feeling. It is standing by the death-bed of a friend, and seeing the faint eyes closed for ever.

For ever! No, not for ever! There is a morning for all, when another day shall dawn; and well were it for some, if the deeds of the dead day could be forgotten.

Still, although we know that another day will rise—as surely as we know that another life will come—there is a sort of hopelessness, though that is too strong a word, in seeing the sinking sun take his parting look of the world. Perhaps it is not hopelessness; but it is a something which transfuses a portion of the twilight gloom into the chambers of the heart, and dims the light of hope, though not extinguishes it.

Edith was sad—very, very sad ; and she felt that gazing on that scene made her still more so. It gave her a sensation of solitariness, of helpless homelessness in a new, wild world, the tendency of which was to depress and enervate ; and, saying to herself—“ I will hope still ; I will not despond ; I will think of nothing but action and endeavour,” she rose and looked about the room for something to occupy the mind and drive away impressions that seemed to crush her energies.

There were many things around which might have answered the purpose, only strange from being found in that place : several books ; a small needle-book, of ancient pattern, but evidently European, and what seemed to be an old sketch-book, with a lock and clasp upon it. It evidently dated from many years before ; was somewhat soiled ; and on one of the sides were two or three dark spots. They were not

of ink, for, through the blackness, there was a red.

Passing by these objects, Edith's eyes turned towards the sketches hanging round the room. On one in particular, the reflected light from the surface of the lake streamed as it passed from the window; and Edith, going near, examined it attentively. It represented the head of a young man, apparently from seven-and-twenty to thirty years of age, and was done well, though not exactly in a masterly manner. It was merely in pencil, but highly finished; and there seemed something in it very familiar to Edith's eye. The features were generally like those of her brother Walter—so like that, at first, she imagined that the drawing must be intended to represent his head; but the nearer view showed that it was that of a much older person; and the dress was one long gone out of fashion.

She was still gazing and puzzling herself with the questions of whence these drawings could come, and whether they could be Otaitsa's own productions, when some Indian women entered, with their noiseless tread, and placed several carved bowls, filled with different kinds of food, before her. It was all very simple ; but she was much exhausted, for she had tasted nothing from an early hour of the day ; and the refreshment was grateful to her. The women spoke to her, too, in the Iroquois tongue ; and their sweet, low-toned voices, murmuring in the sort of sing-song of the tribes, was pleasant to her ear. It spoke of companionship.

Their words, too, were kind and friendly ; and she gathered from them that Otaitsa, in order to veil the real object of her coming, had been making inquiries as to whether any one had seen Walter Prevost. They assured Edith that they had not seen him—that he could not have come into the Oneida country, or some

one in the Castle must have heard of him. A pale-face amongst them was very rare, they said; but the coming of Walter Prevost, whom so many knew and loved much, would have been noised abroad immediately. They said that his absence from his home was certainly strange, but added, laughing, that young warriors would wander, as Edith would discover when she was old enough.

Thus they sat and talked with her, lighting a lamp in a bowl, till Otaita returned; and then they left the two friends alone together.

Otaita was agitated evidently, though she tried hard to hide, if not to suppress, her emotions under Indian calmness; but her agitation was evidently joyful. She laid her small hand upon Edith's, and pressed it warmly.

"I have found friends," she said; "those who will work for me, and with me: my father's sister, who knew and loved my mother, and who is supposed by some to have a charm

from the Great Spirit to make men love and reverence her—the wife of the Sachem of the Bear—the young bride of the Running Deer—the wife of the Grey Wolf—the wife of Lynx-foot—and many others. All these have vowed to help me, whatever it may cost. They all know Walter: they all have called him brother; and they all are resolute that their brother shall not die. But I must first work for him myself, dear Edith,” she continued. Then, clasping her hands together with a burst of joy at the hope lighted up in her young, warm heart, she exclaimed—“Oh, that I could save him all by myself!—that I might buy him from his bonds by my own acts alone—ay, or even by my own blood! Huagh! Huagh! that were joyful indeed!”

Edith could hardly raise her mind to the same pitch of hope; still, she felt more satisfied. Her object was accomplished. Otaita was informed of Walter’s danger; and the bright, enthusiastic girl was already actively engaged

in the effort to deliver him. There was something, too, in the young Indian, an eagerness, an energy, unusual in the depressed women of her race, and probably encouraged by the fond, unbounded indulgence of the chief, her father, which seemed to breathe of hope and success; and it was impossible to look into her eager and kindling eyes, when the fancy that she could deliver her young lover all alone took possession of her, without believing that, if his deliverance was within human power, she would accomplish it.

Edith felt that her duty so far was done, and that her next duty was towards her father, who she well knew would be painfully anxious till she returned, however confident he might have felt of her safety in the hands of the Indians, so long as there seemed no immediate chance of her being placed in such a situation. She willingly therefore agreed to Otaita's suggestion, to set out with the first ray of light on the following morning, Otaita promising that

some Indian women should accompany her a day's journey on the way, who, by their better knowledge of the country, and their skill in the management of the canoe, would greatly facilitate her progress.

About an hour was spent in conversation, all turning upon one subject; and then the two girls lay down to sleep in each other's arms.

CHAPTER IX.

ON the very same night which was passed by Edith Prevost in the great lodge of the Black Eagle, eight or ten wild-looking savages, if they could so be called, assembled apparently to deliberate upon some great and important question. The place they took for their meeting lay nearly twenty miles in a direct line from the Oneida lake, and was, even in the day-light, a scene of no inconsiderable beauty and grandeur.

At the hour of their meeting, however, which was about forty minutes after the sun went down, the surrounding objects were illuminated by a different and a more appropriate light.

Their council-fire had been kindled on the top of a large flat mass of stone, in a very narrow dell or pass which separated a rugged and forest-bearing mountain from a spur of the same range, that seemed to have been riven from the parent chain by some rude and terrible convulsion of Nature. Forty yards, at the widest part, was the expanse of this deep fissure; and on either side were huge masses of rock tumbled about in chaotic confusion, and blocking up the greater part of the bottom of the dell. From behind these, rose the riven cliffs, rough and serrated, like the edges of two saws, the teeth of which would fit into each other if pressed together. But upon all the salient points, even where it seemed impossible for a handful of vegetable mould to rest, a tall tree had perched itself, spreading out its branches almost till they met those on the opposite side of the glen, through which no torrent rushed, neither had any spring burst forth when the earthquake rent the solid foun-

dations of the mountain ; but a dry, short turf covered all the earth accumulated below.

Between the great blocks of stone which encumbered the pass, wherever rain could penetrate, rose tall and graceful wild-flowers ; and, in the more open parts, the grassy carpet was freckled, in the spring-time of the year, with many a curious little blossom. Tall pines and rugged hemlocks—some straight as a column, some strangely twisted and contorted—the great black oak, with innumerable other shrubs and trees, gathered wherever the banks of the dell were a little less precipitous ; and, when one looked up, one perceived, by the overhanging branches, that the mountain top was clothed with a dense covering of forest.

About half-way through the glen was the large flat stone—a sort of natural altar, on which the Indians had lighted their fire ; and strange and wild was the scene, as those swarthy men, armed as if for battle, but not painted, sat around in the broad glare, each

with his rifle resting on his arm, and each still and motionless as a statue, hewn out of the brown rock. Up went the towering flame from the great pile of dry wood, sending a flickering light over tree and precipice; yet no one stirred, no one spoke, for several minutes. Each eye was fixed upon the fire, not as if watching it as an object of interest, but with the steady, thoughtful gaze which shewed that the mind was busy with other things; and there was something very awful in that stern, cold silence.

At length, the Black Eagle began to speak, without moving from his seat—however, at at least, first. His tone, too, was low and sad; though every word, in the sharp guttural language of the Iroquois, was clear and distinct.

“For more than fifty winters,” he said, “I have hovered over the land of the Oneidas; and my wing has not failed in its flight, my eyes have not been dazzled by the blaze of the sun, nor dimmed by the light of the moon.

The dew has fallen upon me, and the summer's sun, and the winter's snow; and still are my feathers unruffled, and my flight as strong as in my youth. I am not a woman, that I should spare; nor a child, that I should weep. Who has seen a tear in my eye? or who has seen the tomahawk uplifted not to strike? Have I asked anything of my children, but to be the first in the battle? Have I ever forgiven the enemies of the children of the Stone? But we have made alliance with a great nation; we have taken presents from them; we have promised to live with them as brothers in the time of peace—to go to battle with them as brothers in the time of war. *Our* children are *their* children, and their children are ours. Moreover, with some of this nation our chiefs have entered into more strict bonds of friendship. We have sat by their fires, we have smoked the pipe of peace together; we are their brothers. One family came and built their lodge amongst us, swept down the forest, planted the corn-field. Their door was always open to the red man;

their food was always shared with him. They said not, 'This is mine, and that is thine,' but they opened their arms and they said, 'Thou art my brother.' The children of the Stone loved them well; they were dear to the Black Eagle, as his own eaglets. The mat in the house of Prevost was a pleasant resting-place to his forehead when he was tired. *His* daughter was as *my* daughter, and his son as of my blood and bone.

"A man came to his hearth whom we all know, a good man, a friend to the red man. Should my brother Prevost refuse to the Woodchuck room to burrow for one night? He went away, and, far from the house of our brother, he met an Oneida, of the Totem of the Tortoise; a man who had robbed him, and who had a lying tongue, a Snake who hated him whom he had bitten. The tomahawk was bare; and the Oneida was killed; but the man took not his scalp, he sung no song of triumph over the children of the Stone. He slew him not as an

enemy, but in self-defence ; otherwise he would have twisted his finger in the scalp-lock, and the Oneidas would have mourned over a disgrace. It is right that there should be blood for blood ; that the man who sheds the blood of the red man should die for his act ; and that, if he or none of his relations could be found, some other man of his nation should be made the sacrifice.

“ But what have I done that the son of my brother should be taken ? Have I led you so often in the battle, have I covered my war-post with the scalps of your enemies, that the tree I planted should be rooted up when the forest is full of worthless saplings ? Was there no other white man to be found in all the land, that you must take the child of him who loved and trusted us ? Had a moon passed, nay, had even a week gone by, that you might know that there was none but the beloved of the Black Eagle whom you might use for your sacrifice ? Had you made sure even that you could not

catch the murderer himself, and take his blood in requital of the blood he shed? Is the wisdom of our people gone by, is their cunning a thing of other days, that they could not lure the man they sought into their power, that they could not hunt down any other game, that they would not even try to find any one but the one we loved the best?

“Remember, my children, that you are not rash and hasty, like the pale-face, but that you are the children of the Stone; and though, like it, unchangeable, and strong, you should be calm and still, likewise.—I have said.”

There was a pause of several minutes before any one answered; and then a man of the middle age, not so tall as the Black Eagle, by several inches, but with a peculiarly cunning and serpent-like look about his eyes, rose slowly from his seat, and, standing on the very point of the rock where he was placed, said, in a hard cold tone,

“The Black Eagle has spoken well. We

are allies of the white man. The pale-face calls us his brother. He takes our hunting-grounds. He plants corn and feeds oxen amongst us. Where our foot was free to go, is ours no longer; it is his. He has taken it from us; and he is our brother. The Black Eagle loves the pale-face. He took a pale-face for his wife, and he loves all her race. He loves their religion. His daughter is of the religion of the white man. He, himself, has faith in their Gods. Their Great Spirit he adores, and he has made their medicine-man his son by adoption. Is the religion of the white man the same as the religion of the children of the Stone? Is *their* Great Spirit *our* great spirit? No; for I have heard his words spoken, and they are not the words that we are taught. The white men's Spirit tells us that we shall not do that which our Great Spirit tells us to do. It bids men spare their enemies, and to forgive. Ours tells us to slay our enemies, and to avenge. Which is the true Spirit? Our own; for the

pale-face does not believe in his own Spirit, nor obey his commands. He does not spare his enemies; he does not forgive; but he takes vengeance as fiercely as the red man, and against his own law. Let us then obey the voice of our own Great Spirit, and do according to our own customs; for the white man knows his God to be false, or he would obey his commandments.

“Now, what would the Black Eagle have? Would he have us all turn Christians? Or would he have us obey the voice of the Maneto, and follow the customs of our fathers? Have we not done according to our own law? What do our traditions tell us? They say that thou shalt appease the spirit of thy brother who is slain, by pouring out the blood of the slayer. If his blood cannot be had, then that of one of his family, or of his friends. If his family and his friends are not to be found, then that of one of his nation. Lo, now, what is the case, chiefs and warriors of the Oneidas? You have a

brother slain. His soul goes to the land of spirits ; but his bow and his arrows hang idly at his back. His heart is sad and desolate. He howls for food and finds none. He wanders round and round the happy hunting-grounds, and looks in in sorrow ; for he must not enter till the blood of atonement has been shed. He cries to you from the other side of the grave with a great cry : ‘ Give me rest ! ’ Shall his brothers give him none ?—shall they let him wander, cold and hungry, amidst frost and snow within sight of the blessed region, and prevent him from entering ?—or shall we take the first man we find of the race of him who slew him, and by his blood, poured out upon this very stone, appease the spirit of our dead brother, and let him enter the happy hunting-grounds, where his soul may find repose ?

“ Ye men of the family of the Snake ! Ye have done well to seize upon the pale-face whom ye first found ; for ye have made sure of an atonement for the blood of your brother ;

and how could ye know that ye could find it if ye delayed your hand or abandoned your prey. And now let the chiefs and the warriors consider whether they will still keep their brother, who is dead, hungering and thirsting for months in the cold regions, or whether they will make the atonement this very night, and open the way for him into the happy hunting-grounds.—I have said.”

Again a deep silence took possession of the throng, and it was not soon broken; but the eyes of the Black Eagle moved hither and thither round the circle, watching every face; and, when he gathered by a sort of kindling look in the eyes of one of the warriors that he was about to speak, he himself interposed, rising this time to his full height, and saying—

“The medicine-man has spoken, and he has expounded the law; but he has counselled with words contrary to the law. The medicine-man has the law in his heart; but his words are the words of foxes. He has not unfolded the roll

of the law into which the words of the Maneto were whispered ; but he says truly that we are to shed the blood of the murderer of our brother to appease his spirit. If we cannot find him, we are to shed the blood of some one of his near kindred ; if we cannot find one of them, the blood of one of his nation. But have ye sought for the murderer, ye brethren of the Snake ? Can ye say that ye have tried to catch him ? Have ye had time ? Will your brother, who is gone, be contented with the blood of the first pale-face ye can find, when ye might find the real murderer ? Will he lap like the dog at the first pool in his way ? Will he not rather say : ‘ Give us the only sweet water that can allay our thirst ? ’ Would ye mutter in our ears, and make us believe music ? This is not the blood of him who shed our blood. This is not the blood of his kindred. The happy hunting-grounds will not open to the slain for this blood.

“ Oneidas, it is the medicine-man who be-

guiles you from the customs of your fathers. They say: 'Wait till ye have searched diligently. Make sure that ye offer the best atonement that ye can. Do not kill the fox because the panther has mangled the game. Do not shoot the oriole for the thing that the hawk has done.' The son of my brother Prevost is no kin of the Yengee who slew the Snake. His blood will not atone if ye can find other blood more friendly to the murderer. The eyes of the Maneto are over all; he sees that ye have not sought as ye should seek."

Some moments after he had spoken, but with a less interval than had hitherto occurred between any of the speeches, a fierce-looking young warrior arose, and exclaimed—

"Let him die. Why should we wait? The Woodchuck is safe in the land of the Yengees. He has taken himself far from the arrow of the Oneida. There is a cloud between us and him; and we cannot see through it. The Woodchuck has no kindred. He has often

declared so when has sat by the fire, and talked of the deeds he has done. He has boasted that he was a man alone ; that his father was clay, and his mother grass, and the hemlock and the oak his brothers and his sisters. Neither him can we find, nor any of his kin ; but we have taken what was nearest to him—his friend and the son of his friend. This is the blood that will appease the spirit of our brother. Let him die, and die quickly. Does the Black Eagle ask if this boy was his friend ? The Black Eagle knows he was ; but, moreover, it may be that he himself was companion of the murderer even when he killed our brother. They went forth together to seek for some prey. Was it not the red man that the wolves hunted ? They killed a panther and a man when they were both together. That we know ; for there were eyes of red men near. The blood of our brother was licked up by the earth. The skin of the panther was sent by this boy, our captive, to Otaitsa, the daughter

of the Black Eagle. I took it from the runner this very day. The man who brought it is near at hand. The skin is here.—I have said.”

And he threw the panther’s skin down before him, almost into the flame of the fire.

A buzzing murmur ran round the Indians ; and the keen mind of Black Eagle soon perceived that the immediate danger of poor Walter Prevost was greatly heightened.

“ Let the law be announced to us,” he said. “ The roll of the law is here ; but let it not be read by the tongue of a fox. Let the man of ancient times read it. Let the warrior and the priest who kept it for so many years now tell us what it ordains, according to the interpretation of old days, and not according to the rashness of boys, who would be chiefs long before a scalp hangs at the door of their lodge. I can see,” he cried, in a loud voice, starting up from his seat, and waving his arm, as if

some strong emotion overpowered his habitual calmness, "I can see the time coming when the intemperance of youth, and the want of respect for age and for renown, will bring low the power of the Oneidas, will crush the greatness of the Five Nations into dust. So long as age and counsel were revered, they were a mighty people; and the scalps of their enemies were brought from every battle-field. They were a wise people; for they listened to the voice of experience, and they circumvented their enemies. But now the voice of boys and striplings prevails. They take presents, and they sell themselves for baubles. They drink the fire-water till they are no more men—till reason has departed, and courage and strength are not in them. They use the lightning, and they play with the thunder; but the tomahawk and the scalping-knife are green rushes in their hands. Let the law be announced, then; let it be announced by the voice of age and

wisdom, and let us abide by his words, for they are good."

Thus saying, he stepped across the little chasm between him and the second speaker on this occasion, and took up a heavy roll which lay beside the priest or medicine-man. It consisted of innumerable strings of shells sawn into long strips like the pendants of an earring, and stained of three separate colors, black, red, and white. These were disposed in various curious groups, forming no regular pattern, yet not without order; and so many were there in this roll, that, though each was very small, the weight of the whole could not have been less than twenty or thirty pounds.

Thus loaded, and bearing this burden with the appearance of great reverence, Black Eagle carried the roll half round the circle, and laid it upon the knees of a man evidently far advanced in life; although his shaved head and long white scalp-lock showed, to an Indian

eye at least, that he still judged himself fit to accompany the warriors of the tribe to battle.

The chief then slowly resumed his seat, and once more profound silence spread over the assembly. The eyes of all were, it is true, directed towards the old man whose exposition of their laws and customs was to be final ; but not a limb stirred, and even the very eagerness of their gaze was subdued into a look of tranquil attention, except in the case of the young man who had spoken so vehemently, and whose relationship as a brother to the slain Indian excused, in the sight of his tribe, a good deal of unwonted agitation.

For about two minutes after receiving the roll, the old priest remained motionless, with his eyes raised towards the flame that still towered up before him, licking and scorching the branches of a hemlock tree above.

At last, his fingers began to move amongst the carved shells ; and, unloosing rapidly some thongs by which the roll was bound, he spread

out the seemingly tangled mass in fair order. Then, bending down his head, he seemed to listen as if for a voice.

“The law of the Oneidas cannot change,” he said, at length. “It is as the will of Hawaneyoh, the Great Spirit. A white man must die for the blood spilt by a white man. But the spiller of the blood must be sought for, or our brother will still be shut out from the happy hunting-grounds. Listen not to the song of singing-birds against the young man, thou brother of the Snake. Neither do thou make trouble in the Five Nations, because the blossom of the Black Eagle’s tree cannot be reached by thy hand.”

The open allusion to that which he thought was one of the deep secrets of his bosom, was too much for even the Indian stoicism of the brother of the Snake ; and he drew his blanket or mantle over his chest, as if to hide what was within. Black Eagle, however, though probably taken as much by surprise as any one

by the old man's words, remained perfectly unmoved, not a change of expression even appearing upon his rigid features, though the speaker paused for a full minute, as if to let what he had said produce its full effect.

“Remember,” continued the Priest, “the prophecy of the child of the sky, Tohganawatah, when our fathers, under his counsel, joined themselves together in a perpetual league, a life-time before a pale-face was seen in the land. He said, ‘When the White throats shall come, if ye suffer dissensions among yourselves, ye shall pull down the Long House of the Five Nations, cut down the tree of Peace, and extinguish the council-fire for ever.’ And wilt thou, brother of the Snake, bring this cloud upon thy people? Thou shalt search for him who spilt thy brother’s blood, till the moon have changed and waxed and waned again; and then thou shalt come before Sachems of the eight Totems, and make manifest that thou hast not been able to find him or

any of his kindred. Then shall the Sachems choose a pale-face for the sacrifice, and let him die the death of a warrior by the stroke of the tomahawk. But they shall make no delay ; for thy brother must not be shut out from the hunters gone before, more than two moons. —Hiro, I have spoken.”

“Koué, Koué ! It is well !” said all the Indians present, but one ; and, rising from their seats, they raised the roll of their law reverently, and one by one glided down the path which led to the opening of the dell.

CHAPTER X.

SLOWLY up the steep middle street of Albany, walked the great, powerful form of the Woodchuck, about the hour of noon. He was clothed in his usual shaggy habiliments of the forest, with his rifle on his shoulder, his hatchet and his knife in his belt. But his step had none of the light activity of former times ; and his face, which always had a grave and sedate air, was now covered with heavy gloom. Altogether, he was a very singular-looking man.

Though situated inland, and in one of the most central parts of the provinces, the streets of Albany from time to time presented

so many strange figures of different kinds—Indians, negroes, half-breeds, scouts, soldiers, sailors, Dutchmen, Englishmen, and hunters,—that the wanderer, however odd his appearance attracted very little attention as he went. Slowly he found his way up to the gates of the fort, and easily obtained admission to the person he sought. He found him in a mere barrack-room, with the simplest possible furniture, and no ornament whatever to distinguish it as the dwelling of a man of rank. The little camp-bed in one corner of the room, the plain deal table, not even painted, at which he sat writing, the two or three hard wooden stools, without backs, were all such as might have been used in a camp, or carried with an army, without much adding to the *impedimenta*; yet there was something about the young nobleman himself, which instantly informed a visitor that he was in the presence of no common man. He turned his head as

Woodchuck entered, and, as soon as he perceived who it was, he nodded, saying—"Immediately, immediately," and resumed his writing.

Captain Brooks drew a stool to some distance, and fixed his eyes first of all upon the young soldier, seeming to examine his countenance and form with great care. He then turned to another person whom the room contained, and scanned him with thorough accuracy. He seemed to be an Indian, if one might judge by complexion and features; yet he was dressed like one of the followers of the British army. The sort of hunting-tunic he wore was not the ordinary Ga-ka-ah or Indian skirt, but a mere sort of cloth frock with sleeves, fastened round his waist by a leathern belt. It was of a peculiar color, then very much worn both by men and women, of the hue of dead leaves, and called philomot; and on his head he wore a curious sort of cap of untanned leather, much

of the same hue. It was certainly a well-devised dress for the purpose of concealing a wanderer through the woods in the autumn season; but, as I have before said, it was assuredly not Indian; and the long hair, though as black as jet, with a slight shading of moustache upon the upper lip, showed that in all probability there was some white blood in his veins, though not apparent on the surface. The man had much of the Indian impassible gravity, however; and, though he must have seen that he was undergoing a very severe scrutiny by the eyes of Woodchuck, no movement of any of the muscles of the face betrayed his consciousness, and he remained still and statue-like, with his gaze turned earnestly forward upon Lord H——.

The nobleman soon concluded his letter, and, beckoning the man up, placed it in his hands with some money.

“Take that to Mr. Prevost,” he said, “and

tell him, moreover, that I shall myself be up to-morrow before night-fall."

"Stay a moment," interposed Woodchuck; "I may have something to say too, that will make changes. I guess the half-breed had better wait outside a bit."

"Go down to the guard-room," said Lord H——, turning to the man, "and wait there till I send to you. Then, giving an inquiring look to Woodchuck, he added, "He tells me he can reach Mr. Prevost's house this night, if he sets out at once."

"To be sure he can," answered Woodchuck. "If he's the man I believe him to be, he'd go half as fur agin."

The runner took not the slightest notice of the conversation regarding himself and his own powers, nor indeed of the sort of intimation of recognition uttered by Captain Brooks.

"Is not your name Proctor?" said Woodchuck, at last. "I guess it be, though you look older since I saw you."

The other merely nodded his head; and Woodchuck continued, with a sort of grunt of satisfaction—

“That ’ll do ; he can speak, my Lord, though he never do, except at very rare times. Them Ingian devils are as silent as snakes themselves ; but this man beats them all. I travelled some two hundred miles with him, ten year or more ago, and never heard the sound of his voice in the whole way but once, and then he said three words and a half, and stopped.”

“I know he can speak,” said Lord H——, “for he told me how long he would take to go. Go down, Mr. Proctor, as I told you, and wait in the guard-room. You shall hear from me in a minute.”

“He runs like a deer,” said Woodchuck, as the man left the room, “but his way is generally to trot on at a darnation swingeing sort of rate, which does not seem to trouble his shanks at all ; a sort of trot, like, carries him through everything and over everything—

brambles, and bushes, and hills, and stones, and rocks, land or water, all the same. I do believe he'd trot across the Hudson, without much knowing or caring what was anything. The Indians call him Mungnokah ; but, as his father's father was an Englishman, we call him Proctor."

"But can he be relied upon?" asked Lord H——. "He was recommended to me very strongly by General Webb, who employed him upon some difficult services."

Woodchuck mused. "Webb's recommendation," he said at length, "is not worth much ; for what would one give for any word out of the mouth of a man who would suffer a gallant comrade to fall, and a noble garrison to be butchered, without striking one stroke, or moving one step to their assistance ? But, if I recollect right, this Proctor is the runner who contrived to get through Montcalm's army and all the savage devils that were with him, and carried poor Munro's dispatches to Webb.

What became of the other one, nobody knows ; but I guess we could find his scalp, if we sought well amongst the Hurons. Yes, this must be the man, I think ; and if it be, you couldn't find a better. At all events, you can trust him for holding his tongue ; and that's something in a runner. He wouldn't get up words enough in ten years to tell any secret you wanted to keep. And now, General, I've come to talk with you about what's to be done ; and I think we had better settle that before the man goes. He'll get to Prevost's to-night, if he stays these two hours ; and I guess we can settle sooner than that, for I've thought the matter over, and made up my mind."

"And to what conclusion have you come?" asked Lord H——.

Brooks looked down, and rubbed his great hands upon his knees for a moment, as if he hesitated to give the resolution he had formed, after so painful a struggle, the confirmation of uttered words.

“Not a pleasant one,” he said, at length—
“not one easily hit upon, my Lord, but the only one—after all, the only one. I had a sore tussle with the devil last night, and he’s a strong enemy. But I beat him—manful, hand to hand. He and I together, and no one to help either of us.”

The nobleman thought that his poor friend’s wits were beginning to wander a little ; and, to lead him back from the diabolical encounter he spoke of, he said, changing the subject abruptly, “I suppose I could send no one better than this man Proctor?”

“I’ll tell you what it is, Lord H——,” answered Woodchuck ; “I must go myself. There’s no one can save Walter Prevost but Brooks. He’s the man who must do it.”

“And do you think it possible?” asked Lord H——, seeing the great probability of his companion himself being captured by the Indians, and yet hesitating whether he ought to say a word to deter him from his purpose.

“I do think it possible,” said Woodchuck, with a grim smile; “for you see, if these Ingians get the man they want, they can’t and dar’n’t take any other.”

Lord H—— grasped the rough hand of the hunter, saying, in a tone of much feeling, “You are indeed a noble-hearted man, Captain Brooks, if I understand you rightly, to go and give yourself up to these savages, to save your young friend. Nobody could venture to propose such a thing to you, because his having fallen into their hands was not your fault, and life is dear to every one; but—”

“Stay, stay, stay!” cried Woodchuck, “don’t get along too fast. You’ve said two or three things already that want an answer. As to life, it is dear to every one; and I myself am such a fool, that I’d rather, by a good bit, go lingering on here, amongst all this smoke, and dirt, and dull houses, and rogues innumerable, than walk up there and be tomahawked, which is but the matter of a moment after all; for

them Ingians isn't long about their work, and do it completely. Howsoever, one always clings to Hope; and so I think that, if I can get up there amongst the woods and trails that I know so well, I may perhaps find out some means of saving the poor boy and my own life too; and, if I can, I'll do it, for I'm not going to throw away my life like a bad shilling. If I can't do it, why then I'll save *his* life, cost what it will. I shall soon know all about it, when I get up there, for the squaws are all good, kind-hearted critturs; and if I can get hold of one of them, she'll be my scout soon enough, and fish out the truth for me, as to where the boy is, and when they are going to make the sacrifice. Lord bless you, they set about these things, them Ingians, just as orderly as a trial at law. They'll do nothing in a hurry; and so I shall have time to look about me, and see what's to be done without risking Walter's life in the meanwhile. Then you see, my Lord, I've got this great advan-

tage: I shall have a walk or two in my old haunts, among them beautiful woods. The snow will be out by that time; and, to my mind, there's no season when the woods look so well, and the air feels so fresh and free, as in a wintry day, with the ground all white, and wreaths of snow upon every vine and briar, and them great, big hemlocks and pines rising up like black giants all around one. Some folks don't like the winter in the woods; but I could walk on, or go on, in a sleigh through them for ever. Why, that month among the woods, if I'm not caught sooner, would be worth ever so many years in this dull, dirty place, or any other city; for Albany, I take it, is as good as most of them, and perhaps better."

"But I am afraid that in the winter your plan of getting information would not succeed very well," said Lord H——. "In the first place, the Indian women are not likely to go very far from their wigwams, amongst which you

would hardly venture ; and, in the next place, your feet would be easily tracked in the snow ; for these Indians, I am told, are most cunning and pertinacious hunters, and will follow any tracks they see for miles and miles.”

“ I’ve dodged an Ingian afore now,” said Captain Brooks, with a look of some self-importance ; “ and in the snow too. I’ve got the very snow-shoes I did it in. I can walk in my snow-shoes either way, one as well as ’tother ; and so I made ’em believe that I was going east when I was going west, and going west when I was going east. Sometimes I had the shoes on the right way, and sometimes the wrong, so they could make nothing of it. And they think still—for, Lord help you, they are sometimes as simple as children—that the devil must have given me a lift now and then ; for when I got where the trees grew thick together, so that the branches touched, and I could catch a great bough over my head by a spring, I would get up and climb along from

one to another like a bear or a squirrel, sometimes two or three hundred yards before I came down again. I saw a set of them once upon the trail; and when they came where the tracks stopped, they got gaping up into the tree with their rifles in their hands, as if they were looking after a painter; but I was a hundred yards off or more, and quite away from the right line. Then, as to the women, I've thought about that, and I've laid a plan in case I can't get hold of any of them. Now I am going to tell you something very strange, my Lord. You've heard of Free Masons, I dare say?"

Lord H—— nodded his head with a smile; and Woodchuck continued—

“ Well, they've got Free Masons among the Ingians — that's to say, not exactly Free Masons, but what comes much to the same thing*: people who have got a secret among

* This very curious fact is avouched upon authority beyond question. The order was called that of the Honontkoh, and was generally regarded with great doubt and suspicion by the Iroquois.

themselves, and who are bound to help each other in good or evil, in the devil's work or God's, against their own nation, or their own tribe, or their own family ; and who, on account of some devilry or other, dare not, for the soul of them, refuse what a brother asks them. It's a superstition at the bottom of it, and it's very strange ; but so it is."

While he had been speaking, he had unfastened his coat at the collar, drawn his arm out of the sleeve, and bared it up above the elbow, where there appeared a small blue line tattooed on the brown skin.

" There," he said, " there's the mark !"

" You do not mean to say you are one of this horrible association ?" asked Lord H——, with a grave look.

" Not exactly that," answered Woodchuck ; " and as to its being a horrible association or not, that's as folks use it. It may be for bad, and it may be for good ; and there are good men amongst them. I am a sort of half-and-

half member ; and I'll tell you how it happened. I went once in the winter up into the woods to hunt moose by a place where there's a warm spring which melts the snow and keeps the grass fresh ; and the big beasts come down to drink, and, mayhap, eat too. Well, as soon I got there, I saw that some one had been before me ; for I perceived tracks all about, and a sort of stable in the snow for the moose, such as hunters often make to get a number together, and to shoot them down when they herd in it. There were moose-tracks too, and some blood on the snow. So I thought that the Ingians had killed some, and scared the rest away.

“ I was going back by another trail, when I came upon an old man lying partly against a basswood-tree, just as quiet as if he was a corpse ; and I should have thought he was as dead as a stone, if I hadn't seen his shining eyes move as I passed. Never a word did he say, and he'd have lain there and died outright

rather than call for help. But I went up to him, and found the old crittur had been poked terribly by a moose all about his chest and shoulders. So I built up a little hut for him with boughs, and covered it over with snow, and made it quite snug and warm. I took him in and nursed him there; and, as I was well stocked with provisions, parched corn and dry meat and such like, I shared with him.

“I couldn’t leave the poor old crittur there to die, you know, my Lord, and so I stayed with him all the time, and we got a couple of deer, and prime venison steaks we had of them; and at last, at the end of five weeks, he was well enough to walk. By that time we had got quite friendly together; and I went down with him to his lodge, and spent the rest of the winter with him. I had often enough remarked a blue line tattooed upon his arm; and sometimes he would say one thing about it and sometimes another; for these Ingians lie like parrots. But at last he said he would tattoo a

line on my arm ; and when he had done it he told me it was the best service he could render me in return for all those I had rendered him. He said that if ever I met any of the Five Nations tattooed like that, and spoke a word which he taught me, they would help me against their own fathers. He told me something about them and about their set ; but he would not tell me all.

“ I was quite a young lad then, and the old man died the next year, for I went to see him, and found him just at the last gasp. I have since heard a good deal about those people, however, from other Ingians, who all have a dread of them, and call them the children of the devil ; so I take care not to show my devil’s mark amongst them, and have never had need to use it till now.”

“ How will it serve you now ?” asked Lord H——, not at all liking or confiding in the support of such men.

“ Well, if I can get speech of one of them,

even for an instant," replied Woodchuck, "I can get together a band of the only men who will go against the superstitions of their people, and help me to set the poor boy free; and they will do it, whether they be tortoises, or bears, or wolves, or snipes, or stags."

"What—what!" exclaimed Lord H——, in utter amazement. "I do not understand what you mean."

"Only names of their Totems or tribes, my Lord," answered Brooks. "These Ingians are queer people. You must not judge of them or deal with them as you would other men; and these are the only critturs amongst them I could get to help me, if their habits came in the way in the least bit. Now, you know, though I may do something by myself, I may not be able to do all. If I get the boy out of the hole where they have, doubtless, hid him, I have to find out where it is first, and to make sure that we are not followed and overtaken afterwards. I would fain save my life if I

can, my Lord," he continued, looking up in the face of his companion, with a sort of appealing look. "I think a man has a right to do that if he can."

"Assuredly," replied Lord H——; "the love of life is implanted in us by God, himself; and all which can be expected of us by our country or our fellow men, is a readiness to sacrifice it when duty requires us to do so. But now, my good friend, I have another plan to propose. It is probable that hostilities have ceased for this year; and, since I saw you last night, a small party of the scouts, which you know we always have in pay, has been put at my disposal for the very purposes we have in view. They are all acquainted with wood warfare, with Indian habits, and with the art of tracking an enemy or a friend. Would it not be better for you to have these six men with you to give you assistance in case of need? Your own life, at all events, would be more secure."

“I think not,” answered Woodchuck, musingly ; “they might cumber me. No, my Lord, I had better go alone. As for my own life, I may as well tell you at once, I have made up my mind to lose it, or save the boy. The devil put it hard to me that it was no fault of mine he was trapped ; that my life was as good to me as his was to him ; and a great deal more. But, knowing that it does not do to stand parleying with that gentleman, I said, ‘Peter Brooks, it is your fault ; for, if you had not shot the Ingian, Walter would never have been taken. Your life is not as good to you or any body else as his is to him and all the world. He’s quite a lad, and a young lad too, with many a bright year before him. You’ll never see fifty again, and what’s your fag-end worth to any one?’ ‘Not a stiver,’ answered conscience ; and so I resolved to go. Now, as to these men, the scouts, some of them are capital good fellows, and might help me a great deal when once I’m in the thick of

the business. But seven men can't get all together into the Oneida country without being found out. I'll tell you what, my Lord ; if you'll let me place them where I want, one by one, in different places, and they slip into the country quietly, one at a time, they may do good service, and not be discovered."

"Will it not be dangerous so to divide your force ?" asked Lord H——.

"Ingian ways with Ingian people," answered Woodchuck. "But I don't think you understand the thing, my Lord. You see, through a great part of this Ingian territory, we English have built a little fort here, and a little fort there, all the way up the shores of Ontario where they made sad work of it last year at Oswego. Well, if I stow away these scouts at the different posts, the nearest I can to Oneida creek, they will be only at arm's length, and can stretch out their hand to help whenever they're called upon. They'll be able to get in, one by one, quite easily ; for

I've a great notion some of the Ingians have got a spite at Walter, and are not very likely to look for any one in his stead. If they caught me, they'd be obliged to have me; and if the scouts went all together, they'd stop them, for they don't like their number; but one at a time they'll pass well enough, if they understand their business, which is to be supposed."

"I see your plan now," said Lord H——, "and perhaps you are right. You can concentrate them upon any point very rapidly. They shall be sent for, and put under your command this very day."

"No need of command," answered Woodchuck; "scouts don't like to be commanded; and if they don't help with a good will, better not help at all. Just you tell them what I'm about. Let them know that a young man's life is at stake, and they'll work well for it, if they're worth a penny. And now, my Lord, you call up that man Proctor, and send him off to Prevost's house. Call him up here—

call him up here. I've got this large powder-horn which I want to send back, though it's a doubt whether the man can muster words enough to tell who it comes from, and I must get him to do so one way or another."

"I can take it to-morrow myself," said Lord H——.

But Woodchuck shook his head.

"That won't do," he said, with a shrewd look; "the runner must take it. He'll tell Prevost before some of his negroes; and the negroes will tell any Indians that are prowling about; and so it will get round, that I've left the hunting-grounds for good, and I shall slip in the more easily. Always think of everything when you can; and, if you can't do that, think of as much as possible. A hunter's life makes one mighty cautious. I'm as careful as an old raccoon, who always looks nine ways before he puts his nose out of his hole."

Lord H—— called up the runner; and into his hands was delivered the powder-horn for

Mr. Prevost, with Woodchuck's message repeated over and over again, and manifold injunctions not to forget it.

“Tell him I took it that unlucky day I shot the Ingian,” said Woodchuck; “and I don't like to keep what's not my own. It's nearly as good as stealing, if not quite. There, Master Proctor, you can get up words enough to say that, can't you?”

The man nodded his head, and then turned to the door, without any farther reply, beginning his peculiar sort of trot before he reached the top of the stairs, and never ceasing it till he arrived at the door of Mr. Prevost's house.

In the meanwhile, Lord H—— made Captain Brooks stay to partake of his own very frugal dinner, while the scouts were being collected and brought to the fort. They came about two o'clock, ready prepared, at least in part, for what was to follow; for, in the little town of Albany, such an adventure as that which had befallen Walter Prevost was a matter of

too much interest not to spread to every house, and to be told at every fire-side. Most of the men, accustomed to continual action and enterprise of various kinds, were very willing to go, with the prospect of a fair reward before them. Life was so often perilled with them, dangers and difficulties so often encountered, that existence without activity was rather a burden than otherwise. Each, probably, had his selfishness of some kind ; but only one, in whom it took the form of covetousness, thought fit to inquire what was to be his recompense beyond the mere pay for this uncovenanted service.

“Your recompense will be nothing at all,” answered Woodchuck, at once, without waiting for Lord H—— to speak. “I won’t have you with me. The man who can try to drive a bargain when a brave boy’s life is at stake, is not fit to have a share with us. There, go along, and knit petticoats ; you may get a dollar apiece for them. That’s the sort of winter work fit for you.”

The man then sullenly stalked out of the room ; and all other matters were soon settled with his companions. The method of their entrance into the Oneida territory, the different routes they were to take, and the points where they were to halt till called upon, were all arranged by Woodchuck with a sort of natural military skill which was more than once displayed by many of the American people during after wars.

The part of the nobleman who was present was merely to listen, and give some letters to officers commanding different posts. But he listened well pleased and attentively ; for his was a mind always eager to acquire information and direction from the experience of others ; and the insight which he gained into the habits of the new people amongst whom he was, might have been highly serviceable to others as well as himself, had not a sort of pedantry prevailed amongst the older officers in the British army at that time, and for many

succeeding years, which prevented them from adapting their tactics to the new situations in which they were placed.

Wolfe was a splendid exception—but Wolfe was a young man, coming in the dawning of a better day ; and even had he not been so, it is probable that his genius, like that of Wellington, would have shown him that he was born to *make* rules, rather than observe them.

As soon as the scouts were gone, Woodchuck rose to take his leave also ; and, as Lord H—— shook him very warmly by the hand, the good man said, in a tone of strong feeling—

“Thank you, my Lord, for all your kindness. You’ll be glad to know I feel very happy ; and I’ll tell you why. I’m doing something, and I’m doing my duty.”

CHAPTER XI.

“THERE is a light, sir, at the Castle,” said one of the servants of Sir William Johnson, entering the room where he was seated with Mr. Prevost : “it comes from the great court.”

“Then they have arrived,” said the officer, turning to his guest ; “let us set out at once. Are the horses saddled ?”

“They have been kept ready, sir, ever since the morning,” replied the servant, to whom the last words were addressed.

“It is strange,” said Mr. Prevost, as he followed his host towards the door of the room, “that the negro I sent to tell Edith the cause

of my delay has not returned, as I told him. He might have been here four hours ago. I am growing somewhat anxious."

"Be not so ; be not so !" replied Sir William. "Two or three years of forest life, my good friend, are not enough to enure a man to all the little accidents and discomforts he must meet with ; and the first serious danger so shakes his nerves that they vibrate at a trifle. The man's horse may have fallen, or he may have purloined a bottle of brandy, and got drunk, or he may have missed his way, or set out late. Between this house and yours, there is room for chances enough to make a moderate volume. Let us not look out for uncertain evils, when there are real ones enough around us."

"Real ones enough, indeed !" ejaculated Mr. Prevost, with a deep sigh.

A moment after, they reached the front of the stables, from which their horses were immediately brought forth ; and, mounting, they

set out, followed by a small party both on horseback and on foot ; for Sir William, though he affected the simplicity of the Indian, was not at all averse to a little appearance of state and dignity in his dealings with his red allies. There is a certain sort of pride which clothes itself in humility ; and, without at all meaning to assert that the very remarkable man in question desired to make the Indian chiefs feel that his adoption of their manners was a condescension, yet it is certain that from time to time he judged it expedient—perhaps from good motives of policy—to make a somewhat ostentatious display of power and authority.

The night was exceedingly dark. The moon now rose at a very late hour ; and dim clouds hid the stars from the dwellers upon earth. In such a night, and in such circumstances, the fancy even of the most stout-hearted is apt to indulge in deceits ; and, as the eye of Mr. Prevost wandered round, dim forms like spectres seemed to be gliding about the field

of maize, cut in many places, but not yet garnered.

Not feeling certain whether imagination cheated him or not, he made no observation ; and, for some time, Sir William Johnson was silent also ; but, at length, the latter said, in a common-place tone—

“Our good friends seem to have come in great force, probably, in consequence of the urgency of my summons. Now be patient, Prevost, and bear with their cool phlegmatic ways ; for these people often feel the strongest sympathies and serve their friends the best when they seem the most cold and indifferent.”

Mr. Prevost felt already how difficult it was to maintain that equanimity which in theory he estimated as highly as an Indian, and in practice strove for always, but not unfrequently lost. He promised, however, to leave entirely to Sir William Johnson the management of a conference with the chiefs of the Mohawk and Onondaga Nations, which had been proposed

by that officer himself, for the purpose of inducing the two most powerful tribes of the Iroquois to interfere in behalf of Walter, and save him from the fate that menaced him.

Through the gate of the castle, (the door of which stood open as usual, for, although it was filled with large quantities of those stores which the Indians most coveted, its safety was left entirely to the guardianship of their good faith) the two gentlemen entered the large courtyard, which, on this occasion, was quite deserted, the weather being cold enough now to render some shelter agreeable even to an Indian. From the open door of the great hall, which stretched along the larger part of the whole building, came forth a blaze of light; and, on entering, Sir William Johnson and his companion found a number of Mohawk and Onondaga chiefs assembled, sitting gravely ranged in a semi-circle round the fire. Each was fully clothed in his garb of ceremony; and bright and brilliant were the colors displayed in the

dresses and ornaments of the red men ; but, as this was a peaceful occasion, their faces were destitute of paint, and the scalp-lock was concealed under the brilliant and graceful Gostoweh, or cap, in many of which was seen the plume of the white egret, used to distinguish the great chiefs of the different tribes, ever since the feathers of the famous white bird of heaven had been exhausted.

All rose with quiet, native dignity when the Indian agent and his companion entered ; and a murmur of gratulation ran round while Sir William and Mr. Prevost seated themselves in two large chairs.

“ This is our brother,” said Sir William Johnson, pointing to Mr. Prevost.

“ Hai, hai !” exclaimed the Indian chiefs.
“ Peace, peace ! he is *our* brother.”

King Hendrick then approached Mr. Prevost, dressed in his sky-blue coat of European manufacture, presented to him by the reigning

monarch of England, and took his hand, saying, in a tone of friendly sympathy, and in the English tongue, "Our brother is sad. Be comforted."

He then seated himself; and the Attotarho, or grand chief of the whole confederacy, an office held by descent by the chief of the Onondaga Totem of the Bear, advanced to Walter's father, and spoke the same words in Iroquois, showing clearly that the object of the meeting was understood by the Indian leaders.

When all had arranged themselves around again, a silence of some minutes succeeded. It was painful to Mr. Prevost; for no one who has not associated with the Indians can fully comprehend the impressive—I might almost call it oppressive—effect of their exceeding stillness upon grave occasions.

At length, the Attotarho said, rising to his full height, which might be almost termed gigantic, "Our father has sent for us; and

we are obedient children. We are here to listen to his sweet words, and understand his mind."

Sir William Johnson, then, in a speech of very great power and beauty, full of the figurative language of the Indians, related the events which had occurred in the family of Mr. Prevost, and made an appeal to his hearers for counsel and assistance. He represented his friend as an old tree from which a branch had been torn by the lightning; he strove to depict his desolate state; and he told a story of a panther, one of whose young ones had been carried off by a wolf, but who, on applying for assistance to a bear and a stag, recovered her young by their means. "The panther was strong enough," he said, "with the aid of the lion, to take back her young one from the wolf, and to tear the wolf to pieces; but the wolf was of kin to the bear and the stag, and therefore the panther forbore."

"But the bear is slow, and the stag is not

strong, when he goes against his kindred," said the Attotarho, significantly ; "and the lion will never take the war-path against his allies."

"Heaven forbid that there should be need !" exclaimed Sir William ; "but the lion must consider his children, and the panther is his son."

Poor Mr. Prevost remained in a state of painful anxiety while the discussion proceeded in this course, wandering, as it seemed to him, round the subject, and affording no indication of any intention, on the part of the chiefs, to give him assistance ; for figures, though they be very useful things to express the meaning of a speaker, are sometimes equally useful to conceal it.

At length he could bear it no longer ; and, forgetting his promise to Sir William Johnson, he started up with all the feelings of a father strong in his heart, and appealed directly to the Indians in their own tongue, which he had completely mastered, but in a style of eloquence

very different from their own, and, perhaps, the more striking to them on that account.

“My child!” he exclaimed, earnestly, “give me back my child! Who is the man amongst the Five Nations whom he has wronged? Where is the man to whom he has refused kindness or assistance? When has his door been shut against the wandering red man? When has he denied to him a share of his food or of his fire? Is he not your brother and the son of your brother? Have we not smoked the pipe of peace together? and has that peace ever been violated by us? I came within the walls of your Long House trusting to the truth and the hospitality of the Five Nations. I built my lodge amongst you in full confidence of your faith and of your friendship. Is my hearth to be left desolate, is my heart to be torn out, because I trusted to the truth and honor of the Mohawks, to the protection and promises of the Onondaga, because I would not believe the songs of the singing-bird, that

said, 'They will slay thy children before thy face?' If there be fault or failing in me or mine towards the red man in any of the tribes—if we have taken aught from him—if we have spoken false words in his ear—if we have refused him aught that he had a right to ask—if we have shed any man's blood,—then slay *me*; cut down the old tree at the root, but leave the sapling. If we have been just and righteous towards you—if we have been friendly and hospitable—if we have been true and faithful—if we have shed no man's blood, and taken no man's goods,—then give me back my child. To you, chiefs of the Five Nations, I raise my voice; from you I demand my son, for a crime committed by one of the league is a crime committed by all. Could ye find none but the son of your brother to slay? Must ye make the trust he placed in you the means of his destruction? Had he doubted your hospitality—had he not confided in your faith—had he said, the 'lightning of the guns of

Albany and the thunder of her cannon are better protection than the faith and truth of the red man,'—ye know he would have been safe. But he said: 'I will put my trust in the hospitality of the Five Nations; I will become their brother. If there be bad men amongst them, their chiefs will protect me, their Attotarho will do me justice. They are great warriors, but they are good men. They smite their enemies, but they love their friends. If, then, ye are good men—if ye are great warriors—if ye are brothers to your brother—if ye are true to your friends—if ye are fathers yourselves,—give me back my son.'

"Koué, koué!" cried the Indians, in a sad tone, more profoundly affected by the vehement expression of a father's feelings than Sir William Johnson had expected; but the moment that the word was uttered which, according to the tone and rapidity with which it is pronounced, signifies either approbation and

joy, or sympathy and grief, they relapsed into deep silence.

Sir William Johnson, though he had been a good deal amazed and alarmed at Mr. Prevost taking upon himself to speak, and fearful lest he should injure his own cause, now fully appreciated the effect produced ; and would not add a word to impair it.

At length, King Hendrick arose, and said, in a grave and melancholy tone—

“We are brothers ; but what can we do ? The Oneidas are our brethren also. The Mohawks, the Oneidas, the Onondagas, the Cayugas, and the Senecas, are separate nations, though they are brethren and allies. We are leagued together for common defence, but not that we should rule over each other. The Oneidas have their laws, and they execute them ; but this law is common to all the nations, that if a man’s blood be shed, except in battle, the man who shed it must die. If

he cannot be found, one of his nearest kin must be taken. If he have none, one of his tribe or race. The same is it with the Mohawk as with the Oneida. But in this thing the Oneidas have done as the Mohawks would not have done. They have not sought diligently for the slayer, neither have they waited patiently to see whether they could find any of his kindred. The Oneidas have been hasty. They have taken the first man they could find. They have been fearful like the squirrel, and they keep their prisoner lest, in the time of need, they should not find another. This is unjust. They should have first waited, and searched diligently, and should not have taken the son of their brother till they were sure no other man could be found. But, kouè, koué ! what is to be done ? Shall the Mohawk unbury the hatchet against the Oneida ? That cannot be. Shall the Mohawk say to the Oneida : ‘Thou art unjust ?’ The Oneida will answer : ‘We have our laws and you have yours : the Mohawk is

not the ruler of the Oneida: repose under your own tree; we sit upon a stone.' One thing perchance may be done," and a very slight look of cunning intelligence came into his face; "subtlety will sometimes do what force cannot. The snake is as powerful as the panther. I speak my thought, and I know not if it be good. Were my brother, the Attotarho, to choose ten of the subtlest serpents of his nation, and I to choose ten of the subtlest of mine, they might go unpainted and unarmed, and, creeping through the woods without rattle or hiss, reach the place where the young man lies. If there be thongs upon his hands, the breath of a snake can melt them. If there be a door upon his prison, the eyes of a snake can pierce it. If there be a guard, the coil of the snake can twine around him; and many of the Oneida chiefs and warriors will rejoice that they are thus friendly forced to do right, and seek another. I speak my thought; I know not whether it is good. Let those speak

who know ; for no nation of the Five can do aught against another nation alone, otherwise we break to pieces like a faggot when the thong bursts."

Thus saying, he ended, sat down, and resumed his stillness ; and, after a pause, as if for thought, the Attotarho rose, addressing himself directly to Mr. Prevost, and speaking with a great deal of grave dignity.

"We grieve for you, my brother," he said, "and we grieve for ourselves. We know that our great English father, who sits under the mighty pine-tree, will be wrath with his red children ; but let him remember, and speak it in his ears, that the Mohawk and the Onondaga, the Seneca and the Cayuga, are not to blame for this act. They say the Oneidas have done hastily, and they will consult together, around the council-fire, how thou mayest best be comforted. Haste is only fit for children. Grown men are slow and deliberate. Why should we go quickly now ? Thy son is safe ; for the

Oneidas cannot, according to their law, take any sacrifice, except the life of the slayer, till they be well assured that he, the slayer, cannot be found."

Mr. Prevost's lip quivered with emotion as if about to speak ; but Sir William Johnson laid his hand upon him, saying, in a quick whisper, " Leave him to me." And the Onondaga proceeded.

" We will do the best that we can for our brother ; but the meadow-lark has not the strength of the Eagle, nor the fox of the panther ; and if we should fail, it would not be the fault of the Mohawks or the Onondagas.—I have said."

Sir William Johnson then rose to reply, seeing that the Attotarho sought to escape any distinct promise, and judging that, with the support of King Hendrick, a little firmness might wring something more from him."

" My brother, the Attotarho," he said, " has spoken well. The Five Nations are leagued

together in peace and in war. They take the scalps of their enemies as one man. They live in brotherhood. But my brother says that if the Oneida commits a crime, the Mohawk and the Onondaga, the Seneca and the Cayuga, are not guilty of the act, and therefore deserve no wrath. But he says at the same time, that if the man named Woodchuck slays a red man, Walter Prevost, the brother of the red man, must die for it. How is this? Have the children of the Five Nations forked tongues? Do they speak double words? If the Onondagas are not guilty of what the Oneidas do, neither is Walter Prevost guilty of what the pale-face Woodchuck does. May the Great Spirit forbid that your great father, near the rising of the sun, should deal unjustly with his red children, or be wrath with them for acts done by others; but he does expect that his children of the Five Nations will shew the same justice to his pale-face children; and, unless they are resolved to take upon themselves the act of the

Oneidas, and say their act is our act, that they will do something to prevent it. My brother says that haste is for children; and true are his words. Then why have the Oneidas done this hasty thing? We cannot trust that they will not be children any more, or that, having done this thing hastily, they will not hastily do worse. True, everything should be done deliberately; we should show ourselves men, if we want children to follow our example. Let us take counsel then fully, while we are here together. The council-fire burns in the midst of us; and we have time enough to take thought calmly. Here I will sit till I know that my brothers will do justice in this matter, and not suffer the son of my brother to remain in the hands of those who have wrongfully made him a prisoner. Yes, truly, here I will sit to take counsel with the chiefs, till the words of wisdom are spoken, even although the sun should go five times round the earth

before our talk were ended. Have I spoken well?"

"Kouè ! Kouè !" exclaimed a number of voices ; and one of the old Sachems rose, saying, in slow and deliberate tones—

"Our white brother has the word of truth and resolution. The Oneida has shown the speed of the deer, but not the wisdom of the tortoise. The law of the Oneida is our law ; and he should have waited at least one moon, to see if the right man could be found. The Oneida must be in trouble at his own hastiness. Let us deliver him from the pit into which he has fallen ; but let us do it with the silent wisdom of the snake, which creeps through the grass where no one sees him. The rattle-snake is the most foolish of reptiles ; for he talks of what he is going to do before-hand. We will be more wise than he is ; and, as our thoughts are good, we will keep them for ourselves. Let us only say, the boy shall be delivered, if the Mohawks and the Onondagas can do it ; but let

us not say how, for a man who gives away a secret deprives himself of what he can never recover, and benefits nothing but the wind. —I have said.”

All the assembled chiefs expressed their approbation of the old man's words, and seemed to consider the discussion concluded. Mr. Prevost, indeed, was anxious to have something more definite ; but Sir William Johnson nodded his head significantly, saying, in a low tone, “ We have done as much, nay more, than we could expect. It will be necessary to close our conference, with some gifts, which will be as it were a seal upon our covenant.”

“ But have they entered into any covenant ?” rejoined Mr. Prevost. “ I have heard of none made yet on their part.”

“ As much as Indians ever do,” answered Sir William Johnson, “ and you can extract nothing more from them with your utmost skill.”

He then called some of his people from

without into the hall, ordered the stores to be opened, and brought forth some pieces of scarlet cloth, one of the most honorable presents which could be offered to an Indian Chief. A certain portion was cut off for each, and received with grave satisfaction. Mats and skins were then spread upon the floor in great abundance. Long pipes were brought in, and handed round; and, after having smoked together in profound silence for nearly half an hour, the chiefs stretched themselves upon the ground, and composed themselves to rest.

Sir William Johnson and his guest, as a mark of confidence and brotherhood, remained with them throughout the night, but retired to the farther end of the hall. They did not sleep so soon as their dusky companions. Their conversation, carried on in low tones, was nevertheless eager and anxious; for the father could not help still feeling great apprehension regarding the fate of his son; and Sir William Johnson was not altogether without alarm,

regarding the consequences of the very determination to which he had brought the chiefs of the Mohawks and Onondagas. Symptoms of intestine discord had of late been perceived in the great Indian confederacy. They had not acted on the behalf of England with the unanimity which they had displayed in former years; and it was the policy of the British government by every means to heal all divisions and consolidate their union, as well as to attach them more and more firmly to the English cause. Although he doubted not that whatever was done by the chiefs, with whom he had just been in conference, would be effected with the utmost subtlety and secresy; yet there was still the danger of producing a conflict between them and the Oneidas in the attempt, or causing angry feeling even if it were successful; and Sir William, who was not at all insensible to the value of his government's approbation, felt some alarm at the prospect before him.

He and Mr. Prevost both slept at length ; and the following morning saw the chiefs dispersing in the grey dawn of a cold and threatening day.

CHAPTER XII.

THE snow was falling fast ; the early snow of Northern America. The woods had not yet parted with all the splendor of their autumnal foliage ; and the rivers still sang along their beds, confined, indeed, and narrowed in their channel by a ledge of thin ice along their banks, but still gay and sparkling. The air, however, was raw and cold ; the ground hard beneath the tread ; the sky dark and lowering ; and the flakes rested unmelted on the earth, covering rapidly the green grass and the brown leaves.

Otaitsa stole forth from the shelter of the great lodge, passed amongst the huts around,

and out into the fields through the opening in the palisade. She was going where she wished not her steps to be traced, and she knew that the fast falling snow would speedily fill up every foot-print. Quietly and gracefully she glided on till she reached the edge of the deep wood, and then along a little frequented trail, till, at the distance of about half a mile, her eyes, keenly bent forward, perceived something brown crouching still and motionless under cover of a young hemlock, the branches of which nearly swept the ground.

As the Blossom approached, a head, covered with glossy black hair, rolled up behind, was raised above a little bush which partly hid the woman's figure ; and, coming nearer, Otaita asked, in a low voice—

“ Did he pass ? ”

“ No,” answered the young maiden to whom she spoke ; “ it was Apukwa, the medicine-man.”

Otaitsa waved her head sadly to and fro, saying—"I understand." Then, speaking to the girl again, she said—"Now back to the Castle, through the brush there to the other trail, and then home."

Her own walk was to be longer; and on she went, with the same gliding step, till, about half a mile farther, she turned a little out of the path to the right, and there, concealed amongst the bushes, she found an old woman of her tribe, to whom she put the same question, and received nearly the same answer.

"Thou art cold, my mother," said Otaitsa, unfastening her mantle, and throwing it over the old woman; "get thee back with the step of a mule through the most covered ways thou canst find. How far on is the other?"

"More than a mile," replied the old woman; "close at the foot of the rocks."

Otaitsa made no reply, but hastened forward to a spot where some abrupt, but not very

elevated, crags rose up out of the midst of the wood. For a moment, there seemed no one there; and the trail at that spot divided into two, one running to the right, and the other to the left, at the very base of the rocks.

Otaitsa gazed cautiously about. She did not dare to utter a sound; but at length her eye fixed upon a large mass of stone tumbled from the bank above, crested and feathered with some sapling chesnuts. It seemed a place fit for concealment; and, advancing over some broken fragments, she was approaching carefully, when again a head was raised, and a hand stretched out beckoning to her.

Still she trod her way cautiously, taking care not to set her foot on prominent points where the trace might remain, and contriving, as far as possible, to make each bush and scattered tree a screen. At length, she reached her companion's place of concealment, and crouched down behind the rock, by the side of a

young woman, a few years older than herself.

“Has he passed?” asked Otaitsa. “Which way did he take?”

“To the east,” replied the other; “to the rising sun; but it was not the brother of the Snake. It was Apukwa, the bull rush, and he had a wallet with him, but no tomahawk.”

“How long is it since he passed?” asked the Blossom, in the same low tone which they had hitherto used.

“While the crow would fly a mile,” answered the young woman. “Has my husband yet come back?”

“Not so,” replied Otaitsa; “but let us both go, for thou art weary for thy home, my sister, and I am now satisfied. Their secret is mine.”

“How so?” inquired the other; “canst thou see through the rock with thy bright eyes, Blossom?”

“The cunning medicine-man goes not to

pray to his Maneto," answered Otaitsa, "nor to converse with his Hawenergo. Neither does he wander forth to fulfil his fasts in the solitude to the east. Yet he will find no dry deer's-flesh there, my sister; nor any of the fire-water he loves so well. But away there, where I have gathered many a strawberry when I was young, there is a deep rift in the rock, where you may walk a hundred paces on flat ground with the high crags all around you. The wild cat cannot spring up, and the deer winks as he looks down. It has but a narrow entrance, for the jaws of the rock are but half open; and I know now where they have hid my brother. That is enough, for this night, to Otaitsa."

"And what wilt thou do next?" asked her companion.

"Nay, I know not," answered the Blossom. "The sky grows darker—the night is coming on, and we must follow the setting sun if we would not have Apukwa see us. We have yet

time; for the gloomy place he goes to is two thousand paces farther. Come.—Be assured, dear sister, I will call for thy aid when it is needful, and thou wilt as soon refuse it as the flower refuses honey to the bee. Step carefully in the low places, that they see not the tracks of thy feet.”

Thus saying, Otaitsa led the way from their place of concealment with a freer air (for she knew that Apukwa had far to go), but with as cautious a tread as ever, lest, returning before the night had fully fallen, he should see the footprints in the snow.

They had been gone about ten minutes, when, creeping silently down along the trail from the east, the medicine-man appeared at the farthest corner of the rock within sight; but he was not alone. The Indian, whom they called the brother of the Snake, was with him. The latter, however, remained at the point where he could see both ways, while Apukwa came swiftly forward. At the spot where the trail

separated, he paused, and looked earnestly down upon the ground, bending his head almost to his knees. Then he seemed to track something along the trail towards the Indian Castle; and then, turning back, walked slowly up to the rock, following exactly the path by which the two women had returned.

At length, he seemed satisfied; and, quickening his pace, he rejoined his companion.

"Thou art right, brother," he said. "There were two. What dimmed thine eyes that thou canst not tell who they were?"

"I was far," answered the other; "and there is shadow upon shadow."

"Was not one Otaitsa?" asked the medicine-man, slowly. "Could the brother of the Snake fail to know the Blossom he loves to look at?"

"If my eyes were not hidden, it was not she," replied his companion. "Never did I see the great Sachem's daughter go out, even when the sun has most fire, without her mantle round her. This woman had none."

“Which woman?” asked Apukwa; “thou saidest there were two.”

“One came, two went,” replied the other Oneida; “but the second could not be the Blossom, for she was tall. The other might have been, but she had no mantle, and she seemed less than Black Eagle’s daughter—more like Koya, the daughter of the Bear. What were the print of the moccasins?”

“The snow falls fast, and covers up men’s steps, as time covers the traditions of our fathers,” replied the medicine-man; “they were not clear, brother. One was bigger than the other, but that was all I could see. Yet I sent the Blossom in this thing, my brother. The worshipper of the God of the pale-faces would save the life of the pale-face, had he made milk of the blood of her brother. She may love the boy too well, as her father loved the white woman. She has been often there, at the lodge of Prevost, with the pale-face priest or her father—very often; and she has

stayed long. That trail she likes to follow better than any other; and the Black Eagle may think that his Blossom is a flower fit to grow by the lodge of the Yengees, and too beautiful for the red man. Has not my brother dreamed such dreams? has not his Maneto whispered to him such things?"

"He has," answered the brother of the Snake, in a tone of stern meaning; "and my tomahawk is sharp. But we must take counsel on this with our brethren, to make sure that there be no double tongues amongst us. How else should these women see our tracks, when we have covered them with leaves?"

It is probable that this last expression was used figuratively: not actually to imply that a precaution, very common amongst Indians, had been taken in this case; but that every care had been used to prevent a discovery, by the women of the nation, of any part of the proceedings in regard to poor Walter Prevost.

"My tongue is single," said the brother of

the Snake ; “and if I had a double tongue, would I use it when my enemy is under my scalping-knife ? Besides, am I not more than my brother ?”

And, baring his arm, he pointed with his finger to that small blue stripe which Woodchuck had exhibited on his own arm to Lord H—— in Albany.

“My brother listens with the ears of the hare,” said Apukwa. “The Honontkoh never betray each other. But there are young men with us who are not of our order. Some are husbands, some are lovers ; and with women they are women. Yet we must be watchful not to scatter our own herd. There must be no word of anger ; but our guard must be made more sure. Go thou home to thine own lodge ; and to-morrow, while the east is still white, let us hold council in the wigwam farther down the lake. The home wind is blowing strong, and there will be more snow to cover our trail.”

Thus saying, they parted for the night.

But the next morning early, from one of the small fortified villages of the Indians some miles from their great Castle, no less than six young men set out at different times, and took their way separately through the woods. One said to his wife as he left her—

“I go to hunt the moose;” and one to his sister, “I go to kill the deer.” And another told his squaw the same story; but she laughed, and answered—

“Thou art careful of thy goods, my husband. Truth is too precious a thing to be used on all occasions. Thou keepest it for the time of need.”

The man smiled, and patted her cheek, saying—

“Keep thine own counsel, wife; and when I lie to thee, seem not to know it.”

CHAPTER XIII.

IN the chain of low cliffs which ran at the distance of four or five miles from the Oneida village, and to which probably, at one time, the waters of the lake had extended, was a deep cleft or fissure in the hard rock, fourteen or fifteen yards in width at its widest part, and narrower at the mouth than in the interior. One of the rocks, at the time I speak of—though large masses have fallen since, and a good deal altered the features of the scene—buted considerably over its base, and projected so far as almost to touch the opposite crag, giving the mouth of the fissure somewhat the appearance of a cave. On either side, the

walls of this gloomy dell were perpendicular—in some places even overhanging ; and, at the end, where it might have been expected to slope gradually away to the upland, the general character of the scene was merely diversified by a break fifteen or sixteen feet from the ground, dividing the face of the crag nearly into two equal parts. Beneath this ledge was a hollow of four or five feet in depth, rendering ascent from that side impracticable.

It is probable that, at some time in the long, unknown past of America, a river poured here over the edge of the cliff, wearing away the solid rock by its continued action ; and, as in the case of Niagara, carrying the cataract farther and farther back with each succeeding year, but without diminishing the precipitancy of the fall. The stone was of a loose and friable nature, breaking, by all the various accidents of the seasons, into strange and uncouth forms ; and altogether, the place, rarely if ever, visited

by the sun, would have been one of the most dim and gloomy that can be conceived, had not some light, feathery shrubs and trees perched themselves upon several prominent points, especially where the ledge I have mentioned marked out the former site of the cascade.

Underneath that ledge, at the time referred to, had been hastily constructed a small hut or Indian lodge, formed of stakes driven into the ground, and covered over skilfully enough with bark, branches, and other materials of the forest. A door had apparently been brought for it from some distance; for it was evidently old, and had strange figures painted on it in red; across this door was fixed a great bar, which would indeed have been very useless, had not the stakes, forming the walls of the hut, been placed close together, rendering it in reality much stronger than an ordinary Indian lodge.

On the day after Otaitsa's expedition,

mentioned in the preceding chapter, sixteen or eighteen Oneidas of different ages, but none of them far advanced in life, gathered round the mouth of the cleft, and conversed together for several minutes, in low tones, and with their usual slow and deliberate manner. At the end of their conference, one seated himself on a stone near the entrance, two advanced into the chasm, and the rest dispersed themselves in different directions through the woods.

The two who advanced, approached the hut, following each other so closely that the foot of each trod in the step of the other ; and when they reached the lodge, the foremost took down the bar, and opened the door, suffering the light to enter the dark chamber within. The spectacle which that light displayed, was a very painful one.

There, seated on the ground, with his head almost bent down to his knees, his brown hair falling wild and shaggy over his face, his dress

soiled, and in some parts torn, and his hands thin and sallow, sat poor Walter Prevost, the image of despair. All the bright energies of his eager, impetuous nature seemed quelled, the look of happy, youthful, enjoyment, was altogether gone ; and with it the warm hopes and glowing aspirations, the dreams of future happiness or greatness, of love and joy and tenderness. The sunshine had departed ; the motes of existence no longer danced in the beam.

He lifted not his head when the Indians entered ; still and impassible as themselves, he sat without movement or word ; the very senses seemed dead in the living tomb where they had confined him. But the sight touched them with no pity.

Gazing at him with a curious, cunning, serpent-like look, Apukwa placed before him a wallet which he carried, containing some dried deer's flesh and parched Indian corn ; and,

after having watched him for a moment, without a change of countenance, he said, in a cold tone—

“There is food—take it and eat.”

As if the sound of his hated voice had startled the youth from a death-like sleep, Walter sprang suddenly to his feet, exclaiming—

“Why should I eat to prolong my misery? Slay me! Take thy tomahawk and dash my brains out! Put an end to this torment, the most terrible that thy fiend-like race have ever devised!”

The two Indians laughed with a low, quiet, satisfied laugh.

“We cannot slay thee,” said the brother of the Snake, “till we know that thy pale-face brother who killed our brother, cannot be found to take thy place.”

“He is far beyond your power,” cried Walter, vehemently; “he will never be within your grasp. I helped him to escape; I de-

livered him from you. Slay me, slay me—dogs of Indians ! Your hearts are wolves' hearts—you are not men, you are women who dare not use a tomahawk. You are the scoff of your enemies. They laugh at the Oneidas ; they spit at them. They say they are children who dare not kill an enemy till the old men say ' kill him.' They fear the rod of their chief. They are like hares and rabbits that tremble at the sound of the wind."

It was in vain that he tried to provoke them. They only seemed to enjoy his agony, and the bitter words that it called forth.

" Eat and drink," said Apukwa coldly, as soon as Walter became silent ; " for we are going to tie thee. We must hunt the deer, we must grind the corn—we cannot watch thee every day, till the time of the sacrifice comes. Eat and drink, then ; for here are the thongs."

Walter glared at him for a moment, and then snatched up a gourd filled with water, which the brother of the Snake had brought,

and drained it with a long and eager draught. He then cast it from him, and stood still and stern before them, saying—

“I will disappoint you. Henceforth I will eat no more. Tie me if you will. I can fast as well as you Indians.”

The two men looked in each other's faces, apparently puzzled how to act, for, if he kept his resolution, their object would indeed be frustrated. The death of their kinsman, according to their superstition, required blood; and by starvation the prisoner would escape from their hands. Still they dared not disobey the decision of the chiefs.

A slight sign seemed to pass between them; and, taking hold of the poor lad somewhat roughly, they bound both his hands and feet, twining the stout thongs of deer-skin round and round, and through and through, in what seemed inextricable knots. He stood quite still and passive; and, when they had done, cast himself down upon the ground again,

turning his face from them. The two men gazed at him for a moment or two, and then, leaving the hut in silence, replaced the bar.

For some time after they were gone, Walter lay just as he had fallen. The dead apathy of despair had taken possession of him; life—thought—feeling, were a burden. The many days which had passed in that dull, dark, silent abode, were rapidly producing on his mind that effect which solitary confinement is said too often to occasion. The transition is easy from anxiety, grief, fear, through melancholy and gloom, to despair and madness. Oh, man, never shut out hope from thy fellow creature; or, if it must be so—if crime requires relentless punishment—then, whatever a false philanthropy would say, give thou death when thou takest away this world's hope, for then thou openest the gate of the grave to a brighter light than that which is extinguished. The all-seeing eye beams with mercy as well as light.

He lay in that death-like stillness for several hours ; and there came not a sound of any kind during all that time, to relieve the black monotony of the day. His ear, by suffering, had been rendered painfully acute ; but the snow fell noiselessly ; the wild animals were in their coverts or in their dens ; the very wind had no breath.

Suddenly there was a sound. What was it ? It seemed like a cracking branch far up above his head. Then a stone rolled down and rattled over the bark roof, making the snow slip before it. Another crashing branch, and then a silence, which seemed to him to last for hours.

“ Some panther or cat-a-mount,” he thought, “ in the trees above.” And he laid his half-raised head down again upon the ground.

No ! There were fingers on the bar. He heard it move. Had the Indians come back to urge the food upon him ? The touch upon the bar, however, seemed feeble, compared with

theirs. It lifted the heavy log of wood slowly, and with difficulty. Walter's heart beat—visions came over his mind—hope flickered up; and he raised himself as well as he could into a sitting posture. From the ground he could not rise, for his hands were tied.

Slowly and quietly the door opened; the light rushed in, and, in the midst of its blaze, stood the beautiful figure of the Blossom, with her head partly turned away as if in the act of listening. Her long wavy hair, broken from its band, and spotted with the white snow, fell almost to her feet. But little was the clothing that she wore: no mantle, no over-dress, nothing but the Indian woman's embroidered shirt, gathered round her by a belt, and leaving the arms and legs bare. Her hands were torn and bloody; her bright face and brow scratched by the fangs of the bramble; but still to Walter Prevost, as she stood listening there, it was the loveliest sight his eyes had ever rested on.

Thus, for a moment, she listened; then gazed into the hut, sprang forward, cast her arms around his neck, and wept, as she had never wept before.

“My brother—my husband !” she exclaimed, leaning her forehead on his shoulder, “Otaita has found thee at length !”

He would fain have cast his arms around her; he would fain have pressed her to his heart; he would fain have told her that he could bear death, or even life, or any fate, for such love as hers. But his hands were tied, and his tongue was powerless with emotion.

A few moments passed in silence; and then Otaita said—

“The cruel wolves have tied thee; but Otaita will give thee freedom.”

In an instant, her small, delicate fingers were busy with the thongs; and with the rapidity of thought they were all untied, and hands and feet were both loose; but, as she worked, the blood dropped from her fingers on his wrists,

and, while he held her to his heart with—oh, how fond, how warm an embrace! he said—

“Thou bleedest, my Blossom. Oh, Otaitsa, what hast thou risked, what hast thou encountered, for Walter’s sake?”

“But little, my beloved,” she answered; “would it were ten times more, to prove my love. What! they have put meat within thy sight, and tied thy hands to make thee die of famine, with food before thee! Out on the cruel monsters!”

“No, no, my Otaitsa,” returned Walter, “I would not eat. I wished to die. I knew not that an angel would come to cheer and help me.”

“And to deliver thee, too, my Walter,” answered Otaitsa, with a bright smile. “I trust it is certain, my beloved. By the way *I* came, by that way *you* can go.”

“How came you?” asked Walter, seating her beside him, and pressing her closer with his arm to the bosom on which she leaned. “I

thought it was impossible for any one to reach me, so hidden is this place, so close the watch they kept. It must have been very perilous for thee, my Blossom. Art thou not hurt?"

"Oh no," she answered; "nor was the peril really great. God gave me wings to fly to thee. Love bore me up. But let me tell thee how I came. I have a friend, the wife of one of thine enemies, a young bride to whom his heart is open as the lake. From her I heard of all their plans; how they have filled the wood below the rocks with watchers; how they have set guards on every trail. They never dreamed that from the morning side a way could be found down over the rock into this dell. I pondered over the tidings, and remembered that, when I was a little happy child, I clambered some way down by the aid of shrubs and crevices in search of fruit; and I laid my plan against theirs. I took two ropes which I had woven long ago of the tough bark of the moose-plant; and, making a wide circle

round, I reached the upland above the cliffs. My only trouble was to find the exact spot from that side ; for I knew that there was a cloud between me and thy enemies, and that I walked unseen. At length, however, I found the rock overlooking the chasm. I cast off all burdens, all that the brambles or branches might snatch at ; and, with the ropes wound round me, came down as far as I could find safe footing. There was a tree, a small tree, on the pinnacle ; and I tried it before I trusted it. One branch broke ; but the root and stump stood firm, griping the rock fast. To them I fixed the end of one rope, and easily swung down to a point below where there was a larger, stronger tree. A stone, however, slipped from under my foot, and fell rattling down. Round the strong tree I twisted the rope again, and thus reached the very ledge over head ; but there, as there had been noise and some crashing of the branches, I stood for a while hidden behind the bushes to make sure that I was not

discovered. At length, however, I was satisfied ; and now the other rope was a friend to give me help. I fastened it to the first, knotted it into tight loops, and thus, aiding hands and feet, with sometimes the aid of a projecting stone, and sometimes a small shrub, came slowly down. By the same way I shall return, my love ; and by it, too, my Walter must go back this night to his own people."

"Why not with you now?" asked Walter, eagerly. "Let Otaitsa go with me, and, whenever we reach my father's house, become my wife indeed. Oh, how gladly will he fold her to his heart ! how fondly will Edith call her, sister !"

"It cannot be, beloved," she answered. "I came to save him I love—to save him who is the husband of my heart, but not to abandon my father till he gives me to you ; and, besides, there would be none to help us. This night you must climb by the ropes and boughs up to the top of the cliff, when, as near as

you can reckon, there have been six hours of darkness. At the top you will find people waiting. They are but women, yet they all love you, and me likewise ; and they have sworn by their Great Spirit, that, if it cost their lives, they will set you free. Each will help you in some way. One has a canoe upon the creek—another knows the deepest woods on the Mohawk side, and can guide you well. Others will lead you down Wood Creek to Sir William Johnson's Castle, where you are safe. Eat now, my beloved ; for you must have strength, and Otaita must leave you soon. Before she goes, she must tie your hands again, lest your enemies come ere the night ; but she will tie them in such a sort, that with your teeth you can undraw the knot ; and she will loosen the fastening of the bar, so that even a weak hand can push it out."

She had hardly uttered the words, when a low, mocking laugh came upon their ears, and two or three dark forms shadowed the door-

way. Otaita instantly started to her feet, and drew a knife from the belt around her waist.

“Stand back,” she cried aloud, in the Iroquois tongue, as the men glided in. “I am your great chief’s daughter ; and the blood of the Black Eagle will not bear a touch.”

“We touch thee not, Blossom,” answered Apukwa. “Thou shalt go free ; for the Black Eagle is a great chief, a mighty warrior revered by his people. But our prisoner we keep ; and, though thou hast loosened his bands, we can fasten them again. Put thy tomahawk in thy belt, brother of the Snake. It must taste no blood here, though it is hungry, I know well. He shall die, but not now.”

As he spoke, he thrust his arm between the younger Indian and Walter, who had cast himself before Otaita as if for one desperate struggle, if he saw any violence offered to her. The words of the medicine-man, however, quieted him on that score ; and it was but too plain that all resistance on his part would be

in vain. A few hours before, he had sought death as a boon ; but the coming of the Blossom had changed all his thoughts and feelings, had relighted hope, and restored firmness and constancy. He was willing to live on for the chances of what some other day might bring ; the love and self-devotion of that beautiful creature made existence seem too valuable to cast away the slightest chance of its preservation. He suffered them to bind him, then, while Otaitsa turned away her head, and struggled against the tears that sought to rise. It cost her a great effort ; but resolution triumphed ; and, with a lofty air very different from the tenderness of her demeanor a few moments before, she waved her hand for the Indians to make way, saying—

“ Unworthy Oneidas ! I go to carry my own tale to my father’s feet, to tell him that, with his own blood warm in my heart, I came hither to save my brother, my lover, my husband ; and to warn him that the tomahawk which falls on that beloved head

severs the chain of Otaitsa's life. But fear not, Walter," she continued, turning towards him, "fear not, my beloved. Live, and laugh thine enemies to scorn. Thou shalt be delivered yet, let these men do what they will. It is written on high, that thou shalt not perish by their hands."

Thus saying, she left the hut ; and, followed closely by two of the Oneidas, pursued her way back towards the Castle.

When she reached the gate of the palisade, she at once perceived a good deal of commotion and activity within, though none but women, youths, and children, were to be seen.

"Where is the Black Eagle?" she asked of the first woman whom she met. "Has he returned to the lodge?"

"He returned with forty warriors," replied the other, in a grave tone ; "painted himself for battle, and has gone forth upon the war-path, taking with him every warrior he could find."

"Against whom?" asked Otaitsa, in as

calm a tone as she could assume, but with her heart beating fast.

“We do not know,” replied the woman, sadly; “but a tale spread, coming out of darkness through which none could see, that the Black Eagle had gone against our brethren, the Mohawks and Onondagas. It was said they had unburied the hatchet, and cut down the tree of peace, before the door of the Oneidas.”

Otaitsa clasped her hands together, bent her head, and took some steps towards the door of the lodge. Then, turning to the two men who had followed her, she said, bitterly—“And ye were absent when the Black Eagle called for warriors? Ye were right; for ye are women, and have only courage to torment a captive.”

Thus saying, she passed on with a quiet step into the lodge; and there, where no eye could see her, gave way in tears to all the sad and bitter feelings of her heart.

CHAPTER XIV.

THROUGH the wide-spread woods which lay between the extensive territory occupied by the Mohawks, and the beautiful land of the Oneidas, early on the morning of the day, some of the events of which have been already recorded, a small troop of Indians glided along in their usual stealthy manner. They were in their garments of peace. Each was fully clothed according to the Indian mode ; and the many-colored mat of ceremony hung from their shoulders, somewhat encumbering them in their progress. They took the narrow trails ; yet it was not so easy for them to conceal themselves, if such was

their object, as it might have been in another dress, and at another time; for, except when passing a still brilliant maple, or a rich brown oak, the gaudy coloring of their clothing showed itself strongly against the dark evergreens, or the white snow.

The party had apparently travelled from night into day; for, as soon as the morning dawned, the head man of the file stopped, and, without changing his position, and thus avoiding the necessity of making fresh prints in the snow, conversed over his shoulder with those behind him. Their conversation was brief, and might be translated into modern English thus:

“Shall we halt here, or go on farther? The day’s eyes are open in the east.”

“Stay here till noon,” said an elder man behind him. “The Oneidas always go to their lodge in the middle of the day. They are children. They require sleep when the sun is high.”

Another voice repeated the same advice; and, springing one by one from the trail into the thicket, they gathered together under a wide-spreading hemlock, where the ground was free from snow, and seated themselves in a circle beneath the branches. There they passed their time nearly in silence. Some food was produced, and also some rum, the fatal gift of the English; but very few words were uttered, and the only sentences worth recording were—

“Art thou quite sure of the spot, brother?”

“Certain,” answered the one who had been leading; “the intelligence was brought by an Albany runner, a man of a true tongue.”

From time to time, each of the different members of the group looked up towards the sky; and at length one of them rose, saying,

“It is noon let us onward. We can go forward for an hour, and then shall be near enough to reach the place, and return while the shadows are on the earth.”

“We were told, to spread out and enter by

several trails," said the elder man of the party.

"It is not needful now," observed the one who seemed the leader; "when it can all be done between sun and sun."

His words seemed conclusive; and they resumed the path again, walking on stealthily in a single file as before. They had gone about three miles more, when a wild, fearful yell, such as no European would believe a human throat could utter, was heard near upon their right. Another rose up on their left, the instant after, and then another in their front. Each man stopped in breathless silence, as if suddenly turned to stone; but each with the first impulse had laid his hand upon his tomahawk. All listened for a repetition of the well-known war-whoop, and each man asked himself what such a sound could mean in a land where the Indians were all at peace amongst themselves, and where no tidings had been received of a foreign foe; but no one

uttered a word, even in a whisper, to the man close to him.

Suddenly, a single figure appeared upon the trail before them, tall, powerful, commanding ; one well known to all there present. It was that of the Black Eagle, now feathered and painted for battle, with his rifle in his hand, and his tomahawk ready.

“Are ye Mohawks?” he demanded, as he came nearer ; “are we brethren?”

“We *are* Mohawks and brethren,” replied the leader of the party ; “we are but wandering through the forest, seeking to find something which has been lost.”

“What is it?” asked Black Eagle, somewhat sternly ; “nothing is lost that cannot be found. Snow may cover it for a time ; but, when the snow melts, it will come to light.”

“It is a young lad’s coat,” said the cunning Mohawk ; “but why is Black Eagle on the war path ? Who has unburied the hatchet against the Oneidas ?”

“The Black Eagle dreamed a dream,” replied the chief, round whom numerous Oneidas, fully equipped for war, had by this time gathered; “and in his dream he saw ten men come from the midday into the land of the Oneida, and ten men from the side of the cold wind. They wore the garb of peace, and called themselves brothers of the children of the Stone. But the eyes of the Black Eagle were strong in his dream, and he saw through their bosoms, and their hearts were black; and a voice whispered to him they came to steal from the Oneida that which they cannot restore, and to put a burden upon the children of the Stone that they will not carry.”

“Was it not the voice of the singing bird?” asked the young Mohawk chief. “Was the dream sent by the bad Spirit?”

“I know not,” answered the Black Eagle. “Say ye! But the Black Eagle believed the dream, and, starting up, he called his warriors round him, and he sent Lynx-eyes, the Sachem

of the Bear, to the north, and led his own warriors to the south, saying, 'Let us go and meet these ten men, and tell them, if they be really brethren of the Oneida, to come with us and smoke the pipe of peace together, and eat and drink in our lodges, and return to their own land when they are satisfied; but, if their hearts are black and their tongues double, then let us put on the war-paint openly, and unbury the long-buried hatchet, and take the war-path like men and warriors, and not creep to mischief like the silent copperhead.'"

The last words were spoken in a voice of thunder, while his keen black eye flashed, and his whole form seemed to dilate with indignation.

The Mohawks stood silent before him; and even the young chief, who had shown himself the boldest amongst them, bent down his eyes to the ground. At length, however, after a long pause, he answered—

“The Black Eagle has spoken well ; and he has done well, though he should not put too much faith in such dreams. The Mohawk is the brother of the Oneida : the children of the Stone and the men of blood* are one, though the Mohawk judges the Oneida hasty in deeds. He is a panther that springs upon his prey from on high, before he sees whether it be not the doe that nourished his young. He forgets hospitality—”

The eyes of the Black Eagle flashed fiercely for a moment ; but then the fire went out in them, and a grave, and even sad, look succeeded.

The young man went on boldly, however, saying—

“He forgets hospitality. He takes to death the son of his brother, and sheds the blood of him who has eaten of the same meat with him.

* A name greatly affected by the Mohawks.

He waits not to punish the guilty, but raises his tomahawk against his friend. The Five Nations are an united people: that which brings shame upon one, brings it upon all. The Mohawk's eyes are full of fire, and his head bends down, when men say, 'The Oneida is inhospitable: the Oneida is hasty to slay, and repays faith, and trust, and kindness, by death.' What shall we say to our white Father beyond the salt waters, when he asks us, 'Where is my son Walter who loved the Oneidas, who was their brother, who sat by their council-fire, and smoked the pipe of peace with them?' Shall we say, 'The Oneidas have slain him, because he trusted to the hospitality of the Five Nations, and did not fly?' When he asks us, 'What was his crime? and did the Oneidas judge him for it like calm and prudent men?' shall we answer, 'He had no crime, and the Oneidas took him in haste without judgment. He was full of love and kindness towards them—a maple tree overrunning with

honey for the Oneidas ; but they seized him in haste when, in a few moons, they could have found many others ?' If we say thus, what will our great Father think of his red children ? Black Eagle, judge thou of this ; and, when thou dreamest another dream, see thou forked-tongued serpents hissing at the Five Nations, and ask, 'Who made them hiss ?'—I have spoken."*

The feelings excited by this speech in all the Oneida warriors who heard it, would be difficult to describe. There was much anger ; but there was more shame. The latter was certainly predominant in the breast of Black

* The word "Hero," or "Hiro," ("I have spoken,") was so common in all the speeches of the Orators of the Five Nations, that it was supposed to have given rise, in combination with the word "Koué," (an exclamation either of approbation or grief, according as it was pronounced, quickly or slowly) to the name of "Iroquois," given by the French to the Five confederate Nations.

Eagle. He put his hand to his shoulder, as if seeking for his mantle to draw over his face ; and, after a long pause, he said,

“ Alas, that I have no answer ! Thou art a youth, and my heart is old. My people should not leave me without reply before a boy. Go in peace. I will send my answer to him who sent thee ; for our brethren, the Mohawks, have not dealt well with us in using subtlety. There are more of you, however. Let them each return to his home ; for the children of the Stone are masters of themselves.”

“ Of us there are no more than thou seest,” returned the young man.

Black Eagle gazed at him somewhat sternly, and then answered,

“ Six men have entered the Oneida lands from this side, since morning yesterday, by separate ways. Let them go back. We give them from sun to sun, and no one shall hurt them. But if they be found here after that, their scalps shall hang upon the war-post.”

Thus saying, he turned and withdrew with his warriors, while the young Mohawk and his companions glided back through the woods, towards their own district, almost as silently as they came.

The returning path of the great Oneida chief was pursued by him and his companions with a slow and heavy tread. Not a word was spoken by any one; for deep grief and embarrassment were upon each; and all felt that there was much justice in the reproof of the young Mohawk. They had come forth with feelings of much indignation and anger at the intelligence which had been received of the interference of other tribes in the affairs of the Oneida people, and they still felt much irritation at the course which had been pursued; but their pride was humbled, and their native sense of justice touched by the vivid picture which had been given of the view which might be taken by others of their conduct towards Walter Prevost. They knew, indeed, that that

conduct was mainly attributable to one family of one Totem ; but they felt that the shame fell upon the whole nation, and would be reflected to a certain degree upon the confederacy generally.

Nothing grieved or depressed the Indian so much as the sense of shame. It was produced, of course, by very different causes from those which affected an European : still it was very powerful ; and Black Eagle felt that, in the case of Walter Prevost, the customs of his own people had been violated by his hasty seizure, and that he himself, the chief of the nation, was in some degree responsible in the eyes of all men for an act which he had permitted if he had not done.

At this time, while the confederacy of the Five powerful Nations remained entire, and a certain apprehensive sense of their danger from the encroachments of the Europeans was felt by all the Indian tribes, a degree of power and authority had fallen to the great chiefs which

probably had not been accorded to them in earlier and more simple times. The great chief of the Mohawks called himself King, and in some degree exercised the authority of a monarch. Black Eagle, indeed, assumed no different title than the ordinary Indian appellation of Sachem ; but his great renown, and his acknowledged wisdom, had perhaps rendered his authority more generally revered than that of any other chief in the confederacy. The responsibility, therefore, weighed strongly upon him ; and it was with feelings of deep gloom and depression that he entered the great Oneida village shortly before the hour of sunset.

The women and children were all assembled to see the warriors pass ; all, excepting Otaitsa, who sat before the door of Black Eagle's great lodge, with her head bent down under an oppressive sense of the difficulties and dangers of her coming task.

Black Eagle saw her well, and saw that she

was moved by deep grief; but he gave no sign even of perceiving her; and, moving slowly and with an unchanged countenance to the door, he seated himself beside her, while his warriors ranged themselves around, and the women and young people formed another circle beyond the first. It was done without concert and without intimation; but all knew that the chief would speak before they parted.

Otaitsa remained silent, in the same position, out of reverence for her father; and, after a pause, the voice of Black Eagle was heard, saying—

“ My children, your father is grieved. Were he a woman, he would weep. The reproach of his people, and the evil conduct of his allies, would bring water into the eyes that never were moist. But there is a storm upon us—the heaviest storm that ever has fallen. The waters of our lake are troubled, and we have troubled them ourselves. We must have counsel. We must call the wisdom of many men to avert

the storm. Let, then, three of my swiftest warriors speed away to the heads of the eight tribes, and tell them to come hither before the west is dark to-morrow, bringing with them their wisest men. Then shall my children know my mind, and the Black Eagle shall have strength again.”

He paused; and Otaita sprang upon her feet, believing that intelligence of what she had done had reached her father's ears.

“Ere thou sendest for the chiefs, hear thy daughter.”

Black Eagle was surprised; but no sign of it was apparent on his face. He slowly bowed his head; and the Blossom went on—

“Have I not been an obedient child to thee? have I not loved thee, and followed thy lightest word? I am thy child altogether. Thou has taken me often to the dwelling of the white man, because he is of my kindred. Thou hast often left me there, whilst thou hast gone upon the war-path, or hunted in the moun-

tains. Thou hast said, 'They are of our own blood. My wife—my beloved—was of high race amongst the pale-face people of the east, the daughter of a great chief. I served her in the day of battle, and she became mine; and true and faithful, loving and just, was the child of the white chief to the great Sachem of the Oneidas. Shall I keep her daughter from all communication with her kindred?' Young was I, a mere child, when first thou tookest me there; and Edith was a sister, Walter a brother, to me. They both loved me well, and I loved them; but my love for the brother grew stronger than for the sister, and his for me. We told our love to each other; and he said—'When I am old enough to go upon the war-path, I will ask the Black Eagle to give me Otaitsa; and the red chief and the white chief shall again be united, and the bonds between the Oneidas and the English people shall be strengthened. And we dreamed a dream that all this would be true, and pledged

ourselves to each other for ever. Now what have I done, my father? The brethren of the Snake and the chief Apukwa, contrary to the customs of the Oneida, seized upon my betrothed, carried off my husband captive within four days after their brother was slain by a white man, but not by my Walter. It is not for me to know the laws of the Oneidas, or to speak of the traditions of our fathers; but in this, at least, I knew that they had done evil: they had taken an innocent man before they had sought for the guilty. I found the place where they had hid him. I climbed to the top of the rock above the chasm: I descended the face of the precipice. I tied ropes to the trees for his escape. I loosened the thongs from his hands, and from his feet; and I said, 'This night thou shalt flee, my husband, and escape the wrath of thine enemies.' All this I did; and what is it? It may be against the law of the Oneidas, but it is the law of a woman's own heart, placed there by the Great Spirit. It

is what my mother would have done for thee, my father, hadst thou been a captive in the hands of thine enemies. Had I not done it, I should not have been thy child ; I should have been unworthy to call the Black Eagle my father. The daughter of a chief must act as the daughter of a chief. The child of a great warrior must have no fear. If I am to die, I am ready."

She paused for a moment ; and Black Eagle raised his head, which had been slightly bowed, and said, in a loud, clear voice—

"Thou hast done well, my child. So let every Indian woman do for him to whom she is bound. The women of the children of the Stone are not as other women. Like the stone, they are firm ; like the rock, they are lofty. They bear warriors for the nation. They teach them to do great deeds."

"Yet bear with me a little, my father," rejoined Otaitsa ; "and let thy daughter's fate be in thy hand before all the eyes here present.

Apukwa and the brethren of the Snake had set a watch, and stole upon me and upon my white brother, and mocked thy daughter and her husband, and bound his hands and feet again, and said that he should die."

It is rare that an Indian interrupts the speech of any one; but the heart of the chief had been altogether with Otaitsa's enterprise; and he now exclaimed, with great anxiety—

"Then has he not escaped?"

"He has not," replied Otaitsa; "it went as I have said. Walter Prevost is still in the hands of the brethren of the Snake, and of Apukwa; and he is not safe, my father, even until the nation shall have decided what shall be his fate. When the nation speaks," she continued, emboldened by her father's approbation, "then will Otaitsa live or die; for I tell thee, and I tell all the warriors here present, that if my husband is slain for no offence by the hand of an Oneida, the daughter of the chief dies too."

“Koué, Koué !” murmured the chiefs, in a low, sad tone, as they gazed upon her, standing in her great beauty by her father’s side, while the setting sun looked out from beneath the edge of the snow-cloud, and cast a gleam of rosy light around her.

“He is not safe, even till the word is spoken,” said Otaitsa ; “for they are bad men that hold him. They took him contrary to our customs. They despise our laws. They are Honontkoh, and fear nothing but the tomahawk of the Black Eagle. They drink blood. They slay their mothers and their brethren. They are Honontkoh !”

A murmur of awe and indignation at the hated name of the dark, secret order existing amongst the Indians, but viewed with apprehension and hatred by all the nobler warriors of the tribes, ran round the circle ; and Black Eagle rose, saying—

“Let them be examined ; and, if the stripe be found upon them, set honest men to guard

the lad. To-morrow, at the great council, we will discuss his fate ; and the Great Spirit send us dreams of what is right ! Come with me, my child. The Blossom is ever dear."

Thus saying, he turned and entered the lodge.

CHAPTER XV.

THE promise of the sun-set was verified. The succeeding day dawned bright and clear. The wind had shifted to the south-west; and, as frequently happens in the American autumn, the cold and icy breath of the north-east had been succeeded by a wind as soft and gentle as the warmest sigh of spring. In large masses, the snow fell from the boughs of the hemlock and the pine; the white surface of the earth's covering glistened as if with shining scales, as the upper surface began to melt; and, drop after drop, the water trickled from the extreme boughs of the trees, till the fully-risen sun sent the snow away dissolved into the

streams and into the lake. It was like the recovery of the mind from sorrow, under the bright influence of happier days.

Only here and there, a patch of snow was still seen upon the tops of the hills, or in the more shady parts of the forest; only here and there upon the sky lingered the fragment of a cloud; but, instead of the dark, heavy, grey mass which had palled the heavens on the preceding day, that cloud was as light and soft as the down of the swan.

About two o'clock, several long lines of Indian chiefs and warriors might be seen approaching the great Oneida village. Soon after, a great fire was lighted before the door of the principal lodge; and, as on the preceding evening, the warriors were ranged in a circle round, and the women and children in another beyond.

The great chief, dressed in all the glittering finery of the Indian peace-costume, with feathers, and red and white head-dress, and crimson mantle, and embroidered shirt, and

over-dress, and medals innumerable hanging round his neck, took the seat of honor with a grave dignity such as few civilized monarchs have ever, after the greatest study, been able to attain. He wore no warlike weapons ; nothing but a single knife appeared in his girdle ; and in his hand he carried the richly-ornamented calumet or pipe of peace.

Close behind her father sat Otaitsa, with her heart greatly troubled, less perhaps with fear than with expectation. The Black Eagle had been kind and tender with her when they were alone together. He had held her to his heart with a display of fondness such as an Indian rarely shows openly to his child. He had listened to the whole tale of her love for Walter Prevost, without a word of disapprobation or reproach ; and sometimes even a playful smile had come upon his dark stern face as her words recalled the memory of feelings experienced in youth—like a well-remembered song heard again after a long lapse

of years. Instead of reprehending her attempt to deliver Walter, he commended it highly.

“It was thy part, my child,” said he; “thou shouldst have been a boy, Otaitsa; the warrior’s spirit is in the maiden’s bosom.”

But when she came to speak of her lover’s fate—to plead, to sue, to entreat—the stern, grave coldness of the Indian chief returned; and though she could see that he was full of fixed resolves, she could in no degree discover what they were. The explanation of them she knew was now to come; and it may be imagined, with what eager and intense interest she listened for every word.

There was, of course, some little confusion as the multitude took their places; but it was soon hushed, and then a deep silence ensued. The great pipe was lighted, and sent from hand to hand till it had passed all round the circle; and then, and not till then, Black Eagle rose and spoke.

“Have my words been heard?” he asked;

“have my warriors examined whether any of the dark and infernal order of the Honontkoh are amongst us ?”

He seated himself again as soon as he had made the inquiry ; and, after a moment's pause, two middle-aged warriors who had been with him on the preceding day rose, and took a step forward, while one of them said—

“ We have heard thy words, and examined. The brother of the Snake, Apukwa the medicine-man, and the Flying Squirrel, are Honontkoh. The stripe is upon them, and upon none else.”

“ It is well,” said the chief, rising again. “ Bring forward that man who was taken at our Castle-door last night.”

Half-a-dozen young men sprang upon their feet, and speedily brought from the door of a neighbouring lodge the half-breed runner, Proctor, whom we have seen with Brooks and Lord H——, at Albany. He had a calumet in

his hand, the sign of a peaceful mission ; and he showed no fear, for he knew that his life would be respected, although he had learned by this time that the Oneidas had been greatly excited by some acts referring to the very object of his mission.

Standing in the midst, then, as calm and collected as he had been in the fort at Albany, he hardly gave a glance around the circle, but looked straight, with a cold and inexpressive countenance, at the chief before whom he was placed.

“What hast thou to say?” demanded Black Eagle.

The man remained silent, although there was an evident movement of his lips as if to speak.

“Fear not,” said Black Eagle, mistaking the ineffectual effort to speak for a sign of apprehension, although it really proceeded from a habitual unwillingness to hear the sound of his

own voice ; “ thou shalt go in safety, whatever be thy message. Art thou dumb, man ? Is thy tongue a stone ? ”

“ I am not dumb—I am not afraid,” said the runner, with a strong effort. “ Great chiefs in Albany send me to say, ‘ Give us the boy.’ ”

There he stopped, for it had cost him much to utter so many words.

“ Were they war chiefs ? ” demanded Black Eagle, aloud.

The man nodded his head, and Black Eagle asked—

“ Did they threaten the Oneidas ? Did they say they would unbury the hatchet ? ”

The runner shook his head ; and the chief asked—

“ What did they say, then, would befall us if we refused to comply ? ”

“ Shame ! ” replied Proctor, aloud.

Black Eagle suddenly drew his mantle over his face.

A low murmur spread around, like the hum of a hive of bees; when it had subsided, the chief again rose, and, with an air of grave, sad dignity, looked round upon his people.

“Ye have heard, oh, children of the Stone,” he said, in a rich, clear, deep-toned voice, “what the chiefs of the pale-faces say of the Oneida nation; and there are warriors here who were with me yesterday, when our brethren, the Mohawks, reproached me with treachery and inhospitality towards our pale-face brother, Prevost; and the Black Eagle had nothing to answer. Ye know the history. Why should I sing again the song of yesterday? A man of our nation was slain by one of the Yengees; and the brethren of the dead man seized upon the son of Prevost, who is also *our* son, without searching for him who had spilt the blood. This was contrary to the custom of the Five Nations. But they say the man was not to be found—he was already beyond our territory; and we must take the first

we can find to appease the spirit of our brother. Now Prevost is a good man, loved by all the Five Nations, a brother to the red man, a friend who trusted us. So hard do the Mohawks and the Onondagas think this deed, that they have dealt subtilly with the Oneidas, and striven to rescue our captive from our hands by the crooked ways of the serpent. The pale-face chiefs, too, have sent men into our land, and think darkly of the Oneidas. But the Black Eagle saw what they did, and spread his wings and drove them forth. He had no answer for the reproaches of the Mohawks or of the Yengees. He will give them both their answer this day by the messenger; and the children of the Stone will thereby know his mind. Let them say if it be good."

Then turning to Proctor, he stretched out his hand towards the south, saying—

"When thou goest hence, two of my warriors shall go with thee to the Castle of the

Mohawk, and thou shalt say, ‘ Why hast thou dealt subtilly with the Oneida ? If thou hadst aught against him, why didst thou not send a messenger of peace to tell thy brother thy mind ? or why didst thou not appeal to the great council of the Five Nations to judge between thee and him ? If thou wilt unbury the hatchet, and cut down the tree of peace, and bring trouble into the Five Nations, that the pale-face may prevail and our Long House be pulled down to the ground, paint thy face, and dance the war-dance, and come upon the battle-way ; but follow not the trail of the serpent, to steal unperceived into thy brother’s land.’ ’

A murmur of approbation followed this bold speech ; but the next moment the chief continued, still addressing Proctor, and saying—

“ When thou hast thus spoken to the Mohawk, thou shalt go on to the pale-face chiefs at Albany, and to them thou shalt say,

‘The children of the Stone have heard your message. They are the children of the great King. He is their father and they love him ; but the Oneidas have their own laws, and are led by their own chiefs. They take the war-path against your enemies as against their own ; and ye are glad in the day of battle when they fight the Frenchmen by your side. It is sweet to them that you have used no threats ; and they would not have their white brother think darkly of them. They love, too, the chief, Prevost. They love his son as a brother ; but one of their own children has been slain by one of yours, and their law must be fulfilled. His spirit must not be shut out from the happy hunting-grounds. They will mourn as a whole nation for Walter Prevost ; but Walter Prevost must die, unless the murderer be taken. Thus says the Black Eagle, the great chief of the Oneida nation ; he who has taken a hundred scalps of his enemies, and fought in fifteen titles with your foes and his. Give us up

the murderer if ye would save the boy. He is in your land : you can find him. Do justly by us in this matter, and walk not in the trail of the fox to deceive us, and to save from us our captive.' ”

Then pausing for an instant, he somewhat lowered his voice, but spoke the succeeding words very slowly and distinctly, in order that every syllable might not only be impressed upon the mind of the man he addressed, but be clearly heard and comprehended by all the people around.

“Thou shalt say, moreover, to our brethren, the pale-face chiefs at Albany, ‘The Black Eagle finds that Walter Prevost has fallen into the hands of bad men, men who are not to be trusted, dealers in dark things, vultures whose heads are bare, but whose hearts are covered. The Black Eagle will take the boy from their hands, and will treat him well, and keep him in safety till the hour come. As ye have said that the Oneidas are hasty, that they do rashly,

that they have not sought as they ought to seek—for six moons will Black Eagle keep the lad in peace, as his own son, to see whether ye will give him up the murderer of an Oneida. But, as the chief would slay his own son, if the laws of his people required it at his hands, so will he and the chiefs of his nation slay Walter Prevost, if, in six moons, ye do not give him up the murderer. He shall die the death of a warrior, with his hands unbound, and, as Black Eagle knows the spirit that is in him, he is sure he will die as a warrior should.' This thou shalt say to the English chiefs; let them look to it; the fate of the boy depends upon their counsel. Give him a roll of wampum for his reward, and let him go in peace."

His commands were immediately obeyed, and the half-breed runner removed from the circle.

Then, turning to the warriors without re-seating himself, the chief demanded—

"Have I said well?"

The usual words of approbation followed, repeated by almost every voice present; and then Black Eagle resumed, in a sterner tone, saying—

“ And now, my children, what shall be done to the Honontkoh? I have already removed the captive from their hands; for they are a people without faith. They live in darkness, and they wrap themselves in a shadow. They take their paths in deceit; and we see blood and dissension follow them. Already have they raised against us the wrath of our brethren of the Five Nations; they have brought the yellow cloud of shame upon the Oneidas. They have well nigh severed the threads which hold the roll of our league together. They have laid the hatchet to the root of the tree which we and our English father planted. I say, let them go forth from amongst us. The Totem of the Tortoise casts them forth. We will not have *our* lodges near

their lodges. They shall not dwell within our palisade. Let them betake themselves to the darkness of the forest, and to the secret holes of the rock ; for darkness and secresy are the dwelling-places of their hearts. Or let them go, if they will, to the deceitful Hurons, to the people beyond Horicon, and fight beside the deceitful Frenchmen. With us, they shall not dwell ; let them be seen no more amongst us.—Is my judgment good ?”

A general cry of approbation followed ; the council broke up, and the warriors commenced wandering about, those who came from a distance seeking hospitality in the neighbouring lodges ; for the great lodge itself could not afford room for all.

To her own little chamber, Otaitsa retired at once ; and, barring the door, went down upon her knees, to offer up thanksgiving and prayer—thanksgiving, for hope is ever a blessing—prayer, for danger was still before her eyes.

Safe for the next six months she knew Walter would be, in the careful custody of her father; but she still prayed earnestly that her mother's God would find some way of deliverance, for the sake of Him who died to save mankind.

END OF VOL. II.

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